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Dearest Alice



FOR THE WHITE ROSE OF ARNO



FOR THE WHITE ROSE OF ARNO

BY

OWEN RHOSCOMYL

AUTHOR OF "THE JEWEL OF YNYS GALON," "BATTLEMENT AND TOWER"

C. Van Dyke



NEW YORK
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
LONDON AND BOMBAY
1896

KD 13383



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Press of J. J. Little & Co.
Astor Place, New York

DEDICATION

TO EVERY MAN WHO, NO MATTER HOW PLAINLY HE RECOGNISES
THE BENEFITS WHICH ACCRUED FROM THE DEFEAT OF CULLODEN,
STILL DREAMS LONGINGLY OF THE DEEDS HE WOULD HAVE DONE
TO TURN THE FORTUNE OF THE DAY HAD HE BUT BEEN THERE,

THIS BOOK IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR



THE EPISTLE TO THE READER

IN dubbing this book "For the White Rose of Arno" I was not aware that the phrase was at all questionable, until a student of the Jacobite movement pinked it with a, "Why of Arno? The Pretenders had nothing to do with the Arno. Why not of Tiber?"

In reply I could only say that the phrase was not mine but Pengraig's own, and that it was used also in a pamphlet published immediately after his death for the purpose of vilifying his name and memory. It is certain, therefore, that "the White Rose of Arno" was well understood to express symbolically the Pretender and his cause at the time when both were living factors to be reckoned with. Moreover, Llewellyn, in his biography of Morgan, continues the use of the term, and the latest writer upon the point, Mr. J. Arthur Price, follows in his wake. Thus this book could hardly come out under any other title than the one which meant so much to the chief actors in it.

So much for the title; and as to the matter of the story, I should like to point out that in discussing Charles Edward's march to Derby and subsequent retreat, sufficient weight has never yet been al-

lowed to that part of the Jacobite movement dealt with in this tale. The reason for this lack, however, is a most potent one—neither the documentary nor the traditionary history of that part of the movement has yet been printed. But a great deal of material for such a history still exists, in spite of long neglect, and may some day be gathered and given to the world. In the meantime these pages may serve to shed a little light upon the more dramatic scenes and incidents of an almost forgotten episode, and at the same time to indicate what was perhaps the chief reason why Charles Edward's march upon London ended at Derby.

It is proper to state here that this is the first time that allusion has ever been made in print to the messenger who was undoubtedly despatched from Preston to Wynstay. The story, however, came to me from a source which I hold beyond question, and so must be allowed to stand as evidence in its bare simplicity, even if not in the embroidered outlines of the text.

And so I leave you, Dear Sir or Madam, to discover in the story the application of the allusions in this epistle, the while I sign myself and remain,

Yours very truly,

THE AUTHOR.

FOR THE WHITE ROSE OF ARNO

CHAPTER I

IN the smithy of Efail the smith had just dropped the last hoof of a deep-chested bay horse, and was wiping the sweat from his face with the back of the hand which still held the rasp.

“ You do your work as workmanlike as ever,” said the horseman standing beside him, a gentleman of fifty or thereabouts, booted and spurred for a journey.

“ Yea,” replied the smith, glancing again at the neat finish of his handiwork. Then, looking at the other, he continued: “ I made a good job of it, because it is like to be the last good turn I can ever do for you, Pengraig. Before those shoes wear out I fear you may have need of the nag that wears them, and, Whig as I am, I would not have you think that one of your own people betrayed you by a loose shoe. There will be bloody doings before

those shoes wear out." He shook his head mournfully.

"Tut! tut! Roger Gof," returned Pengraig cheerily; "there will be no blood spilt. The army is away, fighting all over Europe, as usual, for the sake of a petty German principality. Britain is still the catspaw of Hanover, and the jest and scoff of every nation on the Continent. No, soldiers are too few in England just now to make any bloodshed, and what honest man, other than a soldier, would draw blade for the Hanoverian?"

The striker beside the anvil closed his grip suggestively upon the handle of his sledge.

"As to that——" began he.

His master checked him sharply: "Quiet, you." Then to the horseman: "It is strange that you should be so ready to rise, Pengraig. True enough, you are a bard, and all bards follow the White Rose; but then, you have been a lawyer in London so long—and cousin to the king's best admiral, and all. I wonder at you."

"Foh! Why should not a lawyer be an honest man as well—though, for that matter, I hardly ever practised the profession. And you forget that I served as an officer for a couple of stiff campaigns before I was a lawyer, while as to Admiral Mat-

thews, he is his own keeper and his own chooser, as I am mine. I have much better reason for wondering at you."

"No need for your wonder. Look you"—the smith spread his strong hand to indicate the scene—"look you how fair and peaceful all the land lies. Am I one to wish to bring war upon it? Is it right, or worth while, do you think? And for what?"

"For right! To restore our lawful king and the true succession; and when we strike for truth and justice, everything is right and worth while—even to the shedding of blood. 'How fair the land is,' say you. Yea, it is fair; aye, it is more than fair to me when I think of it as the land of my birth. But when I think of it as one of the countries dragged at the heel of the Elector of Hanover, then it becomes foul with dishonour and black with shame. Better a thousand times that it were black with ashes or foul with blood! But, thank God, a new day is dawning—a day when we shall all be free again and James the Third shall wear the crown of his ancestors, and Britain rest once more in peace and honour before the world."

"You will never see that day," put in the striker.

"That you will not," added the smith firmly.

“What!” he went on, “the rags of Rome! Are we all to be Papists, or all burnt?”

“Papists,” retorted the other impatiently. “Am I the man to be a Papist, either? What alehouse talk! Why, this young Prince, Charles Edward, who has just landed in Scotland, was educated by Protestant tutors and governors!”

“Aye, no doubt; and if every man were as sure as you are that the White Rose of Arno—as you call the Pretender—would bring no Red Hat, that Stuart did not spell Pope, then there would be no need of ridings and battles. George would be more eager to get out of London than ever this other to get in. No, that is why we are all against you.”

“Aye, you are all against me now, but when I return you will all be with me.” He was leading his horse into the road as he spoke, and the smith at once stepped forward to take the bridle, the striker at the same hastening to hold the stirrup for the mounting. Once in the saddle, he pulled out a coin to-pay with.

“Nay, keep that,” said the smith, putting it from him. “Some day, perhaps, I’ll go to Pen-y-graig and your lady shall pay me. You will want every penny you carry now, before you are done with this rebellion.”

‘Then let Owen, here, take it to drink the health of King James with,’ smiled the rider cheerily, dropping the coin into the hammer-man’s hand.

“Oh, I’ll do that,” grinned the recipient. “We all know that the air of the Vale of Arno agrees better with James than the air of Britain. So I’ll drink to his keeping his good health in Arno, and to George’s keeping both health and crown in London. Good money is like good ale, and should never be wasted.”

All three laughed at the sally. “I would double the money, only that I fear the smith would be without a striker. It takes a long time to get sober, Owen. But, good day to you both and remember what I say—you will all of you be with me when I return.” He put his horse into motion as he finished speaking.

“One moment, sir,” cried the smith; “is there nothing that will move you? I am thinking of your own good, sir, for we have heard—that is, old Alswn said—that your good lady——”

“Dreamed a dream,” put in Pengraig quietly, as the other hesitated for a word. But both smith and striker saw that the colour ebbed a little from his face as he spoke, and the rougher man was readier than his master in answering.

"You know it was no dream, sir. She foresaw you truly: it was a vision; and such a vision on such a night is——"

"To be expected," interposed Pengraig with a strong effort at cheerfulness. Yet he had to swallow the lump in his throat before he could continue. "Can you not see that it was merely the natural outcome of a loving wife's fears, filling her soul with terror for the dangers which she believed me running into? And since the gallows and the quartering knife are the most sharply outlined of all the possibilities ahead, she of course dwelt upon them till they distracted her; and then comes Hallowe'en, and the Eve of the Feast of the Dead, when, following a silly superstition, she took and lit her candle in the church, and—well, she thought she saw an actual vision. Poor wife! I wish every mumbling old nurse in the country had all such silly, superstitious trash whipped out of her, and then the next generation would at least be free of that nonsense."

"You call it nonsense, sir," returned the smith evenly, "and yet at the same time your face shows that you believe it. Why then will you go, when in your heart you believe that you are going to the scaffold?"

Over the grave face of Pengraig dawned a sad smile of tender strength. "And if I do believe it, what then? Would you have a man turn back from doing what is right merely from fear of death? Was any great thing ever done by men who feared death? Dream or foretelling, one or both, I am still going—and besides, if it be a vision of Fate, then how could I escape by remaining at home? That which is to be, will be, in spite of aught I may do to prevent it. So, a farewell to you both again. Good day."

The two stood silent in the road looking after him as he went, till at length they were roused by the sound of hoofs coming at a sharp trot along the road behind them. The first of the newcomers was a young gentleman of easy face and figure, in direct contrast to the decisive lines on which half a century had moulded the rider just departed.

"Who is that gentleman?" asked he sharply, in English, indicating the disappearing figure ahead.

"*Dim Saesneg!*"* returned the smith quickly.

The young man smiled. "Ah! I forgot," prefaced he, as he repeated the question in Welsh.

"Are you a Whig?" interposed the striker sharply, his empty hand gripping an imaginary hammer shaft.

* I have no English.

"What is that to you?" demanded the rider in turn.

"Or maybe you are some Government spy?" pursued the striker doggedly.

"If you call me Hanoverian even, let alone spy, I'll break every bone in your body!" retorted the young man hotly, raising his whip to strike.

The threatened one grinned through his grime. "Then you are no Whig," quoth he.

"Man, I am looking for Mr. David Morgan. Do Whigs look for him?"

"Sometimes they do—spies," put in the smith heavily. "And they will look for him again, unless he mercifully be killed in some battle, for the bullet and the trench are better than the gallows and Temple Bar."

"Foh! if that be all, I see you are both honest men," answered the rider gaily. "I am a Tory, too, just come from the Jacobite club of Westminster to their president, David Morgan of Pen-y-graig and so forth. Tush! man, I'll prophesy better than that. He shall come neither to trench nor gallows but home here to his own Vale of Taff, when the king shall enjoy his own again, as they sing in London town. And now, tell me, is that the gentleman?"

"That is Pengraig himself," assented the smith.

"David ap Thomas," * supplemented the striker.

"Or David Morgan, as the Prince and our English friends call him," laughed the rider.

"And as the judge will call him when he dooms him," added the smith.

"Stop it, man," cried the rider. "If you were a raven from Dun'r aven you could not croak more dismally. But I am off; good day to you both, for honest men and good fellows."

He started forward at a brisk pace as he ended, followed at a respectful distance by his grimly silent companion. A stern chase is a long one, but Pengraig was easy upon his horse, and within a couple of miles or so he was turning in the saddle in answer to the other's hail.

As soon as he saw him he drew to a halt. "What, is it thou, Ithel? Welcome, welcome. And what brings Meredith of Presgwyn to South Wales instead of to North?"

They were shaking hands before he had finished, and Ithel was beaming with pleasure, though at the same time he flushed a little at the question.

"Why," said he, hesitating a little, "I have

* Morgan's name in the pedigree of his kindred.

brought a letter for you from Alderman Heathcote, and another from the club at Westminster. It is said in London that the Prince is definitely set to march south into England, and it was thought well to send you the news by me. Here are the missives; though I fear my news is stale to you, for all the air seems full of it."

"Aye," returned the other, breaking the seals as he spoke; "what with the rejoicings of friends and the fears of enemies, words fly like hawks in such times as these. But what say the worthy Alderman and 'The Independent Electors of Westminster'?"

Running his eye over the contents of both papers: "Oh," commented he, "the usual story. 'Let the Prince show himself in London,' etc. That is all very well, my good friends; but I think he would show himself in the city all the sooner if you were to turn out, mounted and weaponed, to show him the way thither.

"Well, well; enough of the 'Independent Electors' for the present, and tell me, Ithel, how does my poor wife bear up since my leaving her? For I suppose that you called at Pengraig to find me."

The other blushed a little. "Why, sir, to tell you the truth, I did not enter your house. One of

your old retainers was sitting at the gate bewailing your going, and so I followed straight on, as I thought my news of much importance."

"' Especially as all the air seemed full of it,' " quoted Pengraig; " and even more especially as I had already forestalled it by starting on the journey which these letters were to suggest. But I suppose the old retainer also told you that, of my two daughters, only little Siani remained with my poor wife, and that Mistress Mari had been gone some month or so ago—eh, Ithel ? "

" Indeed, no, sir. He told me absolutely nothing except that you were gone. Had I known that your poor lady and little Siani were alone, I should certainly have gone in and endeavoured to comfort——"

Pengraig slipped a little sigh of relief. His wife's vision, or warning, had not yet reached the ears of the newcomer, then. His spirits rose. " Yes, yes; go on, young gentleman," prompted he quizzically, as the other hesitated. " We are coming on finely. I did not know that it was my wife you were after—for I do not suppose it is little Siani in the nursery whom you would have got down to comfort. Now I had thought it had been her elder sister, Mistress Mari, that attracted you. Oho! This is a pretty

marry-come-up for an unsuspecting husband and father to stumble upon. Yea, indeed! "

The young man's face changed from red to white as he listened to the raillery, fidgeting in the saddle the while. But he screwed his courage and sat bolt upright in replying: "It is true, sir, that I was more than attracted by your daughter Mari. But as soon as I found that she was pledged to another I fought down the notion, until, when I started on this errand to you, sir, I believed that I had thoroughly tutored myself. It was only when I came in sight of your gateway that my courage failed me—and that was why I turned away."

"One moment, Ithel. To whom is my daughter pledged? This is the first I hear of it—it would seem that I really have stumbled upon a piece of news."

"Why, sir," answered the young man in pure surprise, "I supposed you knew all about it, or I should not have mentioned it. As it is, sir, I beg you will not press me further on the matter——"

"Enough on that point," interrupted the other quickly. "One other thing, however; was it my daughter herself who told you this?"

"Why—no," stammered the young man. "I—that is, sir——"

"And enough on that point too," broke in Pengraig briskly again. "I should be loath to tell a young man whom I love that he is a fool; but—Ithel, I am somewhat astonished to hear such a tale from you. Some misunderstood word, dropped casually, I'll warrant, and misconstrued in a moment of pique; and then you brood upon it till you find a whole volume of set meaning and innuendo in the poor half-dozen letters of it, and so end up by 'tutoring' yourself. Fie on you, for a proud young romantic, who must establish his suit by a whole hecatomb of dragons slain on his lady's behalf, and who must thereupon have his lady straightway fall into his arms, together with her whole kingdom, exclaiming, 'I am all yours—take me.'

"Foh, lad, take nobody's word but the lady's own, and don't even take that unless you feel inclined. I never interfere in these matters, but I want to see you bestir yourself. So!"

Ithel listened to the half-bantering tone with a face brightening at every word. By the time it was ended he sat in his saddle as if a fresh horse were under it. "Why, sir," began he; then breaking off, "But I wish you would speak to Iolyn* and 'tutor' him. He does more than deserve it. All

* = Yollin.

the way from London he has ridden behind me like a lackey, just as he is sitting yonder now. I warned him that you would be angry also, but he said I could not tell till we found you—and he stuck stubbornly to that miserable two lengths in rear.”

Pengraig’s face softened instantly. “Poor lad,” said he in a low voice, “I wondered what his notion was”; then, loud enough to reach the one behind: “Come, Iolyn, lad, and say good day to me. Come, the play is over; you have had your prank; now ride soberly alongside. You cannot pass for a lackey in any case.”

The young fellow addressed yielded so far as to come within one length of the others, but there he checked stubbornly. “I can pass for a lackey, and think myself fortunate at that. Was not my mother——”

“There, there, lad,” broke in Pengraig hastily, as he spurred instantly alongside him and seized his hand. “Never mind that now; the day has come at last, thank heaven, when we can put an end to all those horrible deeds done in the name of law. And you are riding with us to the changing of it. Think of that, and ride quietly along with me.”

“Oho!” cried the lad, his eyes flashing in his

face like sheet lightning through a dusky summer night. "And we will burn the canting chafferers of Ludgate; and we will hang Gwgan * Maddox, for he is a Whig, as well as the son of his father."

* Welsh *w* here is like English *oo*.

CHAPTER II

NEVERTHELESS, when they started forward again, Iolyn dropped back to his former distance, and, after one hasty glance at his face, Pengraig tacitly acquiesced in the position. "Poor lad," whispered he to Ithel, "we must humour him for the moment; it will wear off in a day or two, no doubt. But I suppose it is the near prospect of seeing the Hanoverian sent packing that has so seriously upset him—that, and perhaps some foolish taunt of Maddox's."

"Why, sir, there was a very brisk passage between them a day or two before we left London." Meredith spoke in the same low tone as the other. "You remember, sir, the old weapon, the bidogan, that Iolyn bought from the harper of Dinas Mowddy? Well, he drew that upon Mr. Maddox, because he threatened him with the gallows. I managed to get between them and hinder Iolyn till the other could escape by the door. But his folly came near-hand costing him his life; I hope it will be a warning to him."

"If it is not," broke out Pengraig indignantly,

“ then I will read Mr. Maddox a lesson that shall be one. He makes me mad at times. Hang it—but there, there, it will be some time till we see him again, and things will, I hope, have altered so much that he will have other subjects to joke about. And now, enough of that—tell me how things look in London for our cause.”

“ Wynstay hath been so busy, sir, that all the town talks of nothing but Sir Watkin, and so much believes in his words that no one will accept of place or office in this Government. To take office now would be to lose it when the Prince comes, say they. And so you can judge that the city is in a pretty upset.”

“ So like Wynstay,” smiled Pengraig. “ As ready as a mastiff to worry the Hanoverian. But do you think he will be able to get the militia of the city to rise—and who is to bring out North Wales if he stops much longer in town ?”

“ Nay, sir, he hath already left London for Wynstay to gather his kindred. If your way lies by Wynstay, sir——”

“ My way lies to Wynstay, not only by it,” returned the other promptly.

“ And do you take any force with you, sir ?” hazarded Ithel.

“ No, not yet. This must be no ragged rising by parishes, for beadles and tipstaves to put down. I have been with the Duke of Beaufort, and the whole plan is settled for South Wales. Now I am going to confer with Wynstay, who has settled the case for North Wales, and we are then to bring the two movements into line; after which I am to ride north at once and lay the nation's offer at the feet of Charles Edward, the Prince Regent, who will transmit his further commands in the matter. That is why I go without even my own tenants. The rising is to be the rising of the whole nation as one man, so that Hanover may see how deep is our abhorrence of all usurpers.”

“ It is a grand idea, if only it be fulfilled,” said Meredith fervently.

“ Aye, we have planned with care. What men can do in preparation we have done, and now the issue lies in God's hands. If we fail, it will be because He has some mysterious purpose in view; something beyond our weak and finite understanding. But I trust it to Him with a quiet mind.”

They rode in silence for a short distance, and then, rousing from a reverie, “ And as to yourself, Ithel ? ” queried Pengraig.

“ Why, sir, ‘ My foot is in the stirrup and my

sword is on my thigh.' When we come to Wynstay we shall, no doubt, find the Head of my Kindred there, and he will call on me, unless—unless you yourself have some more important task for me, sir?" ended Ithel questioningly.

"Some more important task," repeated the other meditatively. "In any case, there is one task for which you are most fit: a task which must be done before your Chief needs you. I shall have to remain with the Prince when once I join him, because I have all the threads of the plot in my mind and so can give him any information he needs from day to day. Thus, I shall want a trusty messenger to carry his commands back to Wynstay, setting the time and place for the rising of Wales. Now, Sir Watkin knows you for a bold rider to hounds, and I know you for a pretty man with your weapons. You shall be our messenger, and I will warrant you with the Head of your kin."

"I am very deeply indebted to you, sir," replied Ithel, restraining his gladness with difficulty from breaking into a torrent of words of thanks.

They rode over the next mile or two in silence, all their attention being needed to help their horses in the storm-channelled and boulder-strewn track, by courtesy called a road, which they were follow-

ing. Presently they reached a more decent stretch, and here Pengraig looked up with a quick and kindly glance at his companion.

“And there is someone else whom we are likely to meet at Wynstay,” he broke out quizzically, as if some pleasantry had driven all weightier matters out of his head. “You remember that my wife, though born in London, was a Kyffin, and so—what think you, Meredith?—my daughter, Mistress Mari, none other, is at present visiting amongst her mother’s kindred. Will the Head of that kindred claim her, think you, to follow with the rest to the field?”

“If he does,” cried Ithel, putting a bold countenance of jest upon his confusion, “then I will reopen the old feud. Waenddu is still without a boundary; I will build up the old wall again and keep guard upon it. That will fetch every Kyffin of them all back from the Prince’s army, even from the very field of battle,” ended he, with a broad smile.

“Like the bad old days, when the most important war was always the one at a man’s own gate, for his trumpery *erw** of plough-land,” took up Pengraig, smiling too. “Ah, well! Ah, well! We shall see,” ended he, relapsing again into silence.

* *erw* = the amount of land which a team of four oxen could plough in one day.

Next day they found companions for their ride. Drawing rein at Courtfield of the Vaughans, they found that the heir of that house, young Richard Vaughan, was ready saddled for the wars, bound thither under the guidance of William Vaughan, his uncle.

From this place, therefore, they travelled forward as a company of seven, four gentlemen and three servants, for Iolyn still stubbornly persisted in playing the part of lackey. Calling, then, at the houses of all such gentlemen of note and Heads of Kindred as lay in their route, they pushed on steadily until, in the afternoon of a still, bright day in November, they checked at the gates of the great park of Wynstay.

The porter at the lodge answered readily to the questioning of Pengraig. "Yea, the hall is full of gentlemen, for it is a meeting day of the Cycle Club,* as well as a mustering of many kindreds."

"Then we are come at the right hour," quoth Pengraig heartily to the others. "The Cycle Club is to furnish us with three hundred horse, one half

* The Cycle Club was a club composed of the Jacobite gentlemen—*i.e.*, *all* the gentlemen—within a radius of fifteen or twenty miles of Wrexham, excluding Cheshire.

of whom will be gentlemen of descent. We shall be well met, I trow."

A fever of impatience seemed to seize all the party, till quite unconsciously each crowded his horse into a trot, which would have speedily become a gallop down the long avenue, had not Pengraig come to himself.

"Nay, gentlemen," cried he with a laugh, "this is not the enemy in front. We are as eager as boys to the fair. Steady, now, or they will take us for the usurper's dragoons and receive us with musketry instead of handshakes."

All laughed as they drew down. "Aye," cried young Richard Vaughan, "I can hear their voices already. The hall must be crowded."

"Then there must be a regiment already met," returned Pengraig jocosely; "nothing less would crowd the great hall of Wynstay. But here we are, and here, too, is Sir Watkin himself," added he, as they emerged from the denser woodland and came suddenly upon the lawn in front of the house of Wynstay itself.

Here all the scene was full of life and colour. Groups of brightly dressed gentlemen lounged or stood about, while here and there were knots of gaily attired ladies, surrounded by little courts of light-

hearted gallants, giving still greater animation to the picture. The patch that lent piquancy to the cheek of beauty; the powder that added dignity to the heads of manly wearers; the deep lace fringes of the dainty aprons of the former and the shine of the polished shoe-buckles of the latter—all showed that it was a full-dress occasion, and accordingly our young man, Ithel Meredith, lord of Presgwyn, felt a chill which had nothing to do with the weather, as he reflected that he was habited only for camps, and not for courts.

Then he forgot his appearance, as his eye, ranging furtively out of one corner, caught a glimpse of a figure that made him look swiftly away, his hands trembling a little and his pulses playing pit-a-pat. He had seen that she looked up also, but he was too far off to note the sudden paleness of her face, and was, further, too fearfully afraid of being caught looking at her to see that she immediately extricated herself from all the throng of gallants, and took her perturbed way for a stroll beneath the trees of the near woodland.

And he was not conspicuously at his ease in exchanging greetings with the lord of Wynstay, when that massive-fronted knight stepped out of his own especial group to welcome the newcomers. But

Sir Watkin had weightier matters to engross his mind, and his first words to Pengraig, after the punctilio of welcome, effectually banished all vagueness from the mind of Ithel as well as Pengraig himself.

"Ah, Pengraig," said Sir Watkin, "you would hardly believe the strides our cause has made in London these last few days. Here is none other than your own ward, Mr. Maddox, arrived this very day; having ridden, rain and shine, from London hither, as a late recruit to Prince Charles."

"Gwgan Maddox! Impossible," broke out the other in astonishment. "At least—that is, but, tell me, have you accepted him?"

"What else could I do? He came here and immediately sought out his father's tribe and claimed kinship. The Head of his Kindred naturally desires to have as many gentlemen of his own with him as possible, and so he welcomed the young man at once, and thus took the matter out of our hands. But they also look to you to countenance him, since he is still your ward."

"That is true," returned Pengraig readily. "I am his guardian till he be twenty-five, and that is not till some two months yet. Well, well, I cannot say that he was ever a rabid Whig: that was mostly put

on betwixt him and Iolyn. And, again, there was nothing much against him in the matter of his fits of roystering, since that is the way of young men; and I never heard any serious charge brought against him under that head. So, so; and we will be a little careful of him for a day or two till we see him well set in his new principles——”

“ Ah, and we must also allow for the effect of the Prince’s success,” added Sir Watkin. “ The tidings of the victory of Gladsmuir, or Prestonpans, have gone like lightning through England, loosening all ties to the usurper’s cause. There have been some notable coolnesses among his friends and council, since that. Perhaps this case of your ward is one of them.”

“ Let us hope so,” returned the other heartily. “ Why, here he comes——”

“ To pay his respects to his guardian,” added Sir Watkin drily, changing the speech to English.

The young gentleman whose approach caused these last remarks was a slack-lipped specimen of the young blood of the period. Everything about him was of the latest fashion, even to the dubious, half-jaunty, half-suspicious look in his face as he came up. He had pushed the mode to the very edge: his breeches were gartered a hand-breadth

above the knee; his stockings of scarlet silk were clocked with gold; the ruffles at his wrists hung below his finger-tips. His neckcloth was of the most delicate lace, his wig of the tie of the moment; the hat under his arm of a cock not yet settled, so far in the front of fashion was it; while over all he glittered with gold, from the lace on the flaps of his waistcoat pockets to the engraved head and mountings of his elegant walking-cane.

If clothes could have made a man, then Gwgan Maddox would have been a man to wonder at.

And his manners, too. They had all the forms of the most exclusive and select leaders, but, as he went through them, you saw at once that the inward and spiritual grace was not only lacking, but was substituted by a certain something which would have approached veiled insolence in a franker face.

The contrast betwixt his face and figure, redolent of town and tailor, as he bent in bowing to his guardian, compared with the latter's firm yet mobile mouth, clear glance, kindly eye, and strongly knit figure dressed in riding apparel, was enough to have caught the notice of the most casual stroller. But Pengraig had no severity for the little follies of youth; he was only wondering what had moved this

bird of fine plumage to brave the mud and rain of autumn roads, in order to join an enterprise such as was now in hand.

"Ha! Gwgan," said he, "so you have decided to cast in your lot with King James, eh? Well, well, better late than never, and I suppose you have remembered that the new court will want new courtiers—and who so fit to be one as Gwgan Maddox? say you, no doubt. Aye, well, and so your Pencenedl* has claimed you. I hope you'll give a good account of your guardian's ward."

Before Maddox could mince a reply, he was startled out of his jaunty carriage entirely by the jingle of a bridle in his ear. When the rest dismounted, Iolyn had stubbornly remained sitting in the saddle, and now, as he saw the young man bowing and mowing before the other, he spurred up so close that the bit-rings rested on Gwgan's shoulder.

"Oho! Gwgan Maddox, the Whig! Welcome to you. I am servant to Pengraig and Presgwyn; I will be servant to you also."

Maddox stepped hastily back.

"Oh, it is poor Iolyn," said he, as if pityingly. "But never mind, Iolyn, I shall not trouble you to wait on me also. I brought a servant with me,

* Pencenedl = head of kindred, chief of tribe.

and, if you like, he shall teach you your duties properly. I always said you needed teaching."

"Only," put in Pengraig drily, "as Iolyn never was a servant, any more than he is one now, I think he may dispense with the teachings of this paragon of yours, just as he can dispense with that tone of yours. And you, Iolyn," he went on, turning to the lad, "what manner of greeting was that to address to a gentleman? Back, sir, and keep——"

"My place," interposed Iolyn grimly, reining back as he spoke, while the glare seemed to quiver in his eyes. "I did but welcome him to this last chapter of his life, as I shall cry his epitaph at its close."

Pengraig would have checked him still more sternly, but the finikin Maddox put in before him.

"Never heed him, sir; it is only poor Iolyn's way. We all know poor Iolyn."

"Hang you, sir," retorted Pengraig, "you make me mad with your mee-maws and your prickings of him. But I warn you that you have about come to the end of your tether there. I bid you go more warily, lest you go too far and find it out too late!"

Meanwhile Iolyn had turned rein for the stables, repeating to himself over and over again as he went: "Gwgan Maddox and the servant of Gwgan Maddox! But I will look after them both."

CHAPTER III

OUR four travellers were presently ushered into a single spacious chamber upstairs, where the kinsman of their host, who filled the office of his marshal and led them thither, paused to crave pardon for such a crowded manner of quartering them. "You have yourselves seen, gentlemen, that the house is more than full, and there are Lord Barrymore and the Cheshire squires yet to arrive. But I will send up bedding enough so that you shall have each his own couch, and for the rest I hope you will not think us lacking in due regard for such honourable guests as yourselves."

"Trouble no further on that head," answered Pengraig promptly for the rest. "Wynstay is not a place to lose its reputation at this time of the day. What other house could have accommodated us half so well? Rest easy so far as we are concerned."

Thus assured, the marshal departed, and presently the two servants of the Vaughans appeared, headed by Iolyn, bringing in the valises of all four gentlemen in order that they might make some slight

change of apparel before joining the company on the lawn. The scene that had passed below on the meeting with Maddox had, however, invested Iolyn with such an interest for the Vaughans that both of them now observed him as closely as politeness would permit or natural good breeding sanction.

Pengraig both saw and understood the feeling in them, and accordingly, as soon as Iolyn had left the room, he spoke.

"A strange-looking servant that," remarked he, with a sad smile.

"I do confess that he has little of the servant in his appearance or manner," answered William Vaughan.

"You are right," went on Pengraig, "so lithe and shapely as he is, and so handsome, saving for the light that sometimes kindles in his eyes. It is a weary world in some things, and poor Iolyn's story is surely one of the most horrible ever known in it.

"Born in London, he was born into a tragedy indeed. His father was a flourishing merchant, a younger son of Jones of Haim, of the tribe of Tudor Mawr. His mother, young and handsome, had not recovered from the birth of this, her second child, when suddenly her husband disappeared; snapped up by the press-gang, as was discovered afterwards. There being no one to carry on his busi-

ness, his creditors stepped in and stripped, not alone his offices and warehouse, but his house as well. They seized the very bed from under the still weak mother, and—Heaven remember it forever against the abandoned wretches—turned her in that condition into the streets to perish.

“She—well, gentlemen, you can imagine her condition of mind, as well as body. There had been about that time a succession of petty thefts from the shops of Ludgate Hill, and possibly the hearing of these things suggested to her misery a means of stilling for a single moment the gnawings of absolute hunger.

“Herself starving, distracted by the thought of her children perishing in her arms for want of food, this poor girl—for she was but nineteen—went into one of those shops and lifted a piece of linen from the counter. The shopkeeper saw her before she had time to try and conceal it beneath her rags, and, seeing that she was detected, she replaced it on the counter. That was the sum and substance of her crime.

“Well, she was brought to trial, and her defence before the judge was pathetic enough to have moved a heart of stone. Said she: ‘I lived in comfort and wanted for nothing till the press-gang stole my hus-

band from me. But since then I have had no bed to lie on and nothing to give my children, though they be starving and almost naked. I know I have done wrong, but I did not know what I did at the time—grief had crazed me.'

"Now, gentlemen, the parish officers corroborated her story, but it was argued against her that there had been a good deal of shoplifting about Ludgate, and that *another* example of death was therefore necessary. So,"—the voice of Pengraig rose in fierce passion as he continued—"so, in this most Christian realm of Britain, the wretched Mary Jones was told that she must be hanged for the satisfaction of a few tradesmen on Ludgate Hill!

"But come we to the accursed conclusion. When brought up to receive sentence, she was in such a frantic state as proved that her reason had vanished. Yet she was taken to Tyburn and executed, or rather murdered, in a state of unconscious delirium, whilst the youngest of her two babes was still sucking at her breast!

"God! gentlemen, when I think of it my very flesh crawls on my bones with horror, and at times I wonder if Heaven slept!" *

* This hideous story may be more exactly read in the prints of the time of its occurrence.

Pengraig broke off as if choked with anger, and it was a minute or two before the elder Vaughan hazarded a word.

"I remember now. I heard of it at the time, when Sir William Meredith denounced it in the House of Commons, declaring 'that a fouler murder was never committed against the law, than the murder of this poor woman by the law.'"

"And was Iolyn the one——" hesitated Richard Vaughan.

"Torn from his mother's arms in death?" supplemented Pengraig. "Yes, the elder one was already dead of privation before its mother's murder. I had just arrived in London from South Wales at the time, and so I took him, and he has lived in my house ever since. Moody he was at times, and again at times fantastically merry: sometimes keeping to the kitchen for days together and sometimes to my study, but always docile and obedient to us all.

"I did not attempt to bring him up to any trade or profession, since he was hardly of the stuff which any good, easy trader would care to take apprentice; and, besides, some little property early accrued to him from his father's family which, husbanded till he came of age, will quite suffice for his few wants.

“ I was always careful to keep his own story from him ; but, about four years ago, Mr. Maddox learnt it accidentally, and then—but perhaps I had better explain how Mr. Maddox came first upon the scene.

“ His father was also a younger son, but he made a good fortune in London. Dying when his own son was about eighteen, he left me executor of his will and guardian of the lad himself. I sent the boy to Christ Church, my own old college at Oxford, and when he finished there—not very high, I grant you—he came to me in London. It was while he had the freedom of my door-latch that he discovered the tragedy of Iolyn’s beginning, and out of sheer mischief and thoughtlessness—as I imagine—taunted him with it. Whereupon I straightway started my Mr. Maddox upon the Grand Tour.

“ But the mischief was done, and for a while I feared that my poor foster-son would end by becoming hopelessly and violently insane. It was my eldest daughter who gradually won him back to quietness—they had been playmates from childhood. But the vague restlessness of other days had now given place to two distinct moods ; the one, the common or ordinary mood, being a gentle kindness to every member of the household, and the other a fierce stubbornness, born of some unlucky word or

incident reminding him of his mother. Therefore, when Mr. Maddox returned from completing the tour, I allowed him to set up a separate lodging of his own, in order to guard against haphazard meetings with Iolyn, who had come to hate him. For, in brooding over the matter, Iolyn had taken into his head that the father of Maddox had caused his mother's death by pursuing her with a dishonourable passion, and that when his mother had scorned all his advances he had procured the kidnapping of her husband by the press-gang, and had also instigated the rancour of the tradesmen who had her arrested. Nay, he even believes that the elder Maddox paid the prosecuting counsel at the trial—so that you may see how the cruel injustice really done to his mother has brought him to believe possible even the most fiendish ingenuity of cruelty in another.

“Nor can any arguments of mine prevail to remove the notion from his mind—for, of course, not a particle of evidence exists, so far as I ever heard, to sustain such a dreadful charge. I think it must have been some servant's gossiping invention, running after the marvellously horrible in true servant style, which first put the idea into his head. Latterly, however, he was improving; in fact, ever since

Mr. Meredith, here, took up the supposition that he was reading for the bar, and that, of all the barristers in London, I was the only one fit to be his teacher. But, gentlemen—this in parenthesis—though our student was most punctual in his attendance at my house, and never in any way eager to watch the clock for release, yet I fear me he will never become much of a lawyer. All that, however, was forgiven him, because poor Iolyn, connecting him with that Sir William Meredith who spoke so nobly in the House upon his mother's case, struck up a friendship with him, only second in its intensity to his devotion to ourselves.

“And now that you know the poor lad's story, gentlemen, you will no longer see anything strange in his actions, and will be not at all astonished should he this moment take a notion to resume his proper position amongst us as a gentleman—though the presence of Mr. Maddox will, I fear, only intensify his stubborn fit.

“And meanwhile, let us down to the lawn.”

CHAPTER IV

WHEN the party reached the lawn, Pengraig paired immediately with Sir Watkin; the Vaughans were claimed by a group of Catholic Trevors—their co-religionists—while Ithel found himself casting furtive glances right and left, in hope and dread of lighting upon the form of Mari.

Carefully avoiding the gentlemen of his own kindred, lest they should detain him, he made his way till he came upon a group of Kyffins, her mother's kin, gay with the flutter of fans and bright with the sparkle of bubbling wit.

One sympathetic member of it, however, smiling reposefully on the edge of the party, gracefully detached herself long enough to answer his grave bow with a motherly courtesy, and to tell him that Mari had gone for a stroll under the trees—yonder. As he turned to follow the direction he felt that his face was telling tales, and while he moved away he was none the more self-possessed for the sudden interest which the other ladies of the group seemed all at the same instant to take in him.

“ I suppose they mistake me for Maddox,” said he bitterly to himself as he went. “ It must be so, since by this time, no doubt, her father is the only one who does not know of Mari’s engagement to Maddox—though, again, it is possible that Maddox was lying when he told me. Ah, well, I’ll do as Pengraig advised, and put the question plainly to her herself. And then to-morrow I shall go to the wars with a light heart; I mean, with a settled mind.

“ But what a pitiful fop that Maddox is!”

Thus chewing the cud of self-torment, he presently found himself deep in a labyrinth of bare-boughed trees. A little farther, and he caught the sunlight of an open glade ahead. Then the gleam of bright rays upon the soft colours of a woman’s dress held him footfast for an instant till he could gather his thoughts and get himself in hand.

Under a giant oak, lord dominant of all the glade, stood Mari. She did not hear his foot till he was close upon her, and there were tears in her eyes, as he could see before the swift blush ran hotly up to keep them from falling. But a second glance at his face, pale with the emotion which his errand, and the sight of her, inspired, brought down

the blush almost as swift as it had risen; while the first tone of his voice, aided by his whole manner, set the soft eyes welling over with distress.

The sight of her tears drove all else out of his mind. "Do not be offended with me," cried he. "I came because I wished so much to comfort you in your grief"—he was not conscious of the mistake in his words, his heart had usurped his lips—"perhaps there will be no war, after all. The Hanoverian may——"

The pity in his face and words broke her down completely. "Oh, my father!" she wailed. "Oh, he will be surely killed in your dreadful rebellion. Why do you want to make war? Is not one king as good as another?"

He felt that argument was no comfort; he forgot that such a one as Maddox existed; he remembered only this one woman weeping and the hunger in his own heart, and so—what would you?—he put his arms about her to soothe her as if she had been his own betrothed.

But in the midst of his protestations that there was no danger of war, and yet that also he would protect her father with his own life, and so forth and so on, both suddenly realized the approach of a third party, and, starting apart, looked disconcert-

edly to where, not ten paces away, stood Mr. Gwgan Maddox—none else.

Bowing ironically, his voice vibrating with hatred, the newcomer was the first to break the startled silence. "Give ye good day, sir and madam," sneered he. "The scene is altogether captivating and romantic. Gad! I must turn playwright and introduce it—Beauty in tears and Honour as comforter. Lud! it will take the town—after the heads on Temple Bar have ceased to draw."

"Shame on you for your ill-timed jests!" cried Ithel scornfully. "Shame on you, that when you should be doing all in your power to comfort your—this lady" (he had suddenly remembered the supposed engagement), "you break upon her tears with your cowardly insinuations."

"'Shame' and 'cowardly'; how, sirrah?" replied Maddox, laying his hand upon his sword. But his words were bigger than his voice, and neither did he draw the blade, for all his threatening motion.

"Aye, both," returned Ithel recklessly, his voice coming with a rush to the challenge. "You, who should be the first to stand up for her—here you come, and at the first glance condemn her unheard and straightway hurl insult at her. Aye, 'shame!' and 'coward!' You have them both in your teeth,

and you have your remedy in your scabbard if you but dare to draw."

"At the proper time I shall demand a satisfaction in a proper manner. All in good time," said Maddox, a sickly white of indecision making repulsive all his features; "in good and proper time."

"A good time cannot come too soon," retorted Ithel with stinging scorn; "and the proper time to avenge an insult is when it is given, all other things being equal, as they are here."

The sting struck home so keen as to flash a spark from even the craven heart of Gwgan Maddox. With a shiver of elusive resolution he half-drew his blade.

Instantly out flashed that of his taunter, and Mari gave a cry of terror as Ithel advanced towards his opponent. As if in answer to the cry, a latest comer of all dashed into the glade, and Gwgan Maddox, glancing quickly over his shoulder to welcome any interruption, recoiled a long leap in fresh fear as he caught sight of Iolyn, rushing upon him with the great bidog* uplifted ready to strike.

But however much Mari might shrink at the prospect of a duel, a deeper dread than that leaped up in her heart for Iolyn. Springing forward, she flung

* Bidog = Highland bidag = dirk.

both arms around him to hold him fast, at the same time crying to Ithel for help.

“ Oh, help me to hold him! Help me, or he will be hanged for murder!”

Meredith had reached her almost before she could speak, but he found to his astonishment that it was all he could do to hold the right arm which had now escaped from Mari's soft clasp. Seeing that the two had seized Iolyn, Maddox stayed the run which he had already commenced. Halting on the edge of the glade: “ I see,” he cried in a shaken voice; “ this was your reason for pressing me to an instant duel. You had provided your gallows bird to stab me in the back. But if I refrain from publishing your infamy abroad, it is from a desire to spare my guardian and not from any love for you.”

The transparent balderdash of such a speech flushed every vein of Ithel with hot disgust. “ Go, you cur!” he shouted; “ go, or I will drive you off with your own cane, and thrash you on the lawn in the face of all the land.”

“ Ho! Gwgan the Whig. Come back, you Dic-Shon-Dafydd!” * yelled Iolyn also, and at the

* Dic-Shon-Dafydd = that most damnably despicable thing which crawls the earth, viz., a man who affects to despise his own nation and language. The species is not confined to Wales, of course; but nowhere else is it held in deeper detestation.

sound of his desperate voice Maddox sprang away into the wood as if from a wild beast. Moreover, he saw that Ithel could not long continue the struggle, and the thought put his feet in motion to escape while there was yet time. With the cunning of the cur, however, he went but half the distance to the lawn, and then, pausing to see if he were being followed, took a wide circuit and doubled back to a point on the opposite side of the glade to that at which he had first entered it.

As soon as his hateful form disappeared from sight, Iolyn ceased his struggles. "So Gwgan Maddox was following in his father's footsteps," said he to Mari. "He was persecuting you, and Ithel was defending you, eh? But I will watch him closer for the future. I should have come up earlier now, but that I was weighing up his servant, an arrant Whig and a spy to boot, as I remember to have seen him, a hanger-on at the Duke of Newcastle's in London. So when I came on to the lawn it was only in time to see Maddox disappear this way in the trees. I am glad I followed."

Neither Mari nor Meredith attempted any very vigorous argument against the lad's notion, for neither of them cared to explain the scene which Maddox had surprised. But Mari was so eager,

and Ithel so earnest, in pleading to dissuade him from making any future attempt upon the object of their common contempt, that at length he cooled to calm reason. "Then I will promise not to speak to him again while we are at Wynstay," yielded he at last.

After that, a curious hesitancy fell upon them for a moment or two. Ithel had a purpose in view, however, and so he plucked up a desperate courage to serve it.

"Don't you think that you had better go back first, Iolyn? And then, if Maddox tells any cock and bull story of this affair you will hear it, and can come back and wait for us at this edge of the lawn to tell us, so that we can decide how to meet it."

This, in its way, was as transparent a speech as the final one of Maddox. But Iolyn did not seem to see anything. Instead, he answered readily: "Oh, you need not fear that Gwgan Maddox will let out a word of this affair if you let him bide quiet. I warrant you he is even now skulking in some shadow of the house, biting his nails and shivering lest he hear someone talking of his cowardice. He will keep as mum—oh, he will be only too thankful to keep his mouth shut, lest, if he told a word, some one of the listeners might offer to carry a challenge

from him to you. Oh, I know these Gwgans—these Dic-Shon-Dafydd—too well for that.”

“Do you think so? Still, I think it would be wise if you went,” urged Ithel.

Iolyn looked at him, and then a light seemed to break in upon him. “I will,” said he, starting away as suddenly as if something had bitten him.

Mari looked swiftly at Ithel’s face, and then moved as if she would have fled to join the form just disappearing in the wood. But Meredith held her still with an answering look and a half-unconscious gesture. “I want to say something,” came with soft bluntness from his lips.

She started again and looked about as if to escape, but his words were beginning already. “Then I was wrong. You are not engaged to Maddox?” demanded he.

“Oh, no!” she gasped faintly, looking swiftly up into his eyes. That word and that look loosed all his soul, and then—and then his tongue was silver and his heart was fire as he poured out the torrent of his love for her. What matters to repeat the individual words? It is the tone of them, the cadence of their passionate outpouring, the fire of the heart that gives them life, the radiance of the eyes that give them light, the touch of the hand,

the pulsing presence of the one beloved above all earth, that gives their immortality to such moments.

And Maddox peered and watched them from his hiding-place, his heart all arctic and his eyes all hell with unglutted murder.

Once, even, he drew a pistol from beneath his vest as if he would level it at them and consummate the devilish desires in his breast. But he had not even the evil courage of his dastard promptings, and presently he returned the pistol to its place, wiping his sickly lips with a hand that shook with the tugging of foul temptation.

And when, full of mutual kisses and mutual protestations, the two unconscious lovers finally turned and left the glade, he rose and craned after the last glimpse of them, muttering to himself as they disappeared: "Yes, Mistress Mari, and you, Mr. Ithel Meredith of Presgwyn, I'll make you rue the day that you were ever born."

He should certainly have become a playwright, should Gwgan Maddox of—a fashionable address in London.

CHAPTER V

As Ithel and Mari sauntered back to the lawn, she began to wonder "why he had ever dared to think that she was plighted to such a person as Maddox."

"He told me so himself," returned Ithel promptly. "Perhaps I ought for that very reason to have disbelieved the tale—he was ever a liar. But Iolyn said he also believed it, because you had told him that if anything happened to Maddox it would grieve you to the heart. What could I do but believe it then?"

"Oh, what shallow wits men have," cried Mari in pretty scorn. "Why, I only told him that because I heard him breathing threats against Mr. Maddox, and I feared that in some stubborn fit he might kill him in a fancied avenging of his poor mother's murder. But, of course, I could not say what I really meant; namely, that I was afraid that he would do murder and be hanged for it. To mention hanging is to remind him of his mother, and you know what the effect of that sometimes is. Therefore I

put it in the way I did—though perhaps that was not overwise on my part," ended she frankly.

"Well——" began Ithel. And then he changed the word upon his tongue, for he was too new a lover to blame her in anything just yet. "What a cur that Maddox is!" substituted he.

By this time they had reached the lawn again, and a natural hesitancy checked the buoyant steps of both as they caught the full stroke of the joyous picture before them.

"But I think we had better go and speak to your father, sweetest?" said Ithel.

A blushing assent started them across the sward towards the spot where they could distinguish Pengraig, still deep in talk with Sir Watkin. The former caught sight of the advancing couple. "Give me leave," said he hastily; "here come two young turtle-doves to confess."

"And a bonnier pair I never saw," smiled Sir Watkin heartily, as he turned aside for a moment.

Next moment Mari was courtesying in sweet confusion, while Ithel was making such a bow as he had never made before.

"Well?" queried Pengraig, with a twinkle in his eye.

"I took your advice, sir, and asked the lady her-

self," returned Ithel with all the assurance he could muster.

"And, of course, the lady rated you roundly for not doing so before. Do not I know the sly puss? Why, what a pother it all is! And now go and be happy, for here comes Lord Barrymore and a whole corner of Cheshire. God bless you both, and—but, Ithel, you are a slyboots too; pretending to read for the law! Fie! is that what you read in Blackstone—throwing dust in a father's eyes?"

"But, sir——" began Ithel.

"Pooh! pooh!" broke in Pengraig as he turned away. "Take her, and be happy! Tush! man; I suspected you from the first, or I should not be so easy now. But who was the one you were so quick to believe her pledged to?" He hung on his heel as he put the query.

But before he could get the answer Sir Watkin had seized him by the arm. "Pardon me, but you must break off and come to greet Barrymore. Weighty matters! You young rogues, you!" ended he over his shoulder to our lovers, as he bore Pengraig away.

And thus the latter missed the information which might have caused him to take steps against possible harm from Maddox, since he was not free again to

speak to Ithel till they had ridden miles upon their road next morning.

For the present, however, all was life and new bustle in the arrival of the aged Earl of Barrymore, with some twenty or thirty gallant squires of Cheshire in his train.

"This is the one whom the Whigs call the old miser," quoth Puleston of Pickhill to Puleston of Emral, standing by as they watched the newcomers dismount.

"And what will the same Whigs call him when they find what he scraped and pinched for?" put in Eyton of Eyton.

"When they hear his money clinking down to pay our troops in the field, eh?" added Eyton of Coed Llai.

"They'll never lack for names while they can command the lampooners of London," answered Emral with a laugh. "But I know what we of the Cycle will call him over the board after dinner to-night."

For the prime rule of the Cycle Club, enjoining that dinner should be a midday meal, was to be set aside to-day in favour of a dining hour at dark. It was the custom of the time and place that the gentlemen dined alone in one room, the ladies in an-

other; the fair guests coming into the other room to have their healths drunk, and then retiring to their own apartment again for the rest of the evening.

Upon this particular evening especially, therefore, no exception was made to the custom, for the business to be promulgated over the board was too weighty for interlarding with compliments and airy nothings. Nay, even the customary healths to the ladies were omitted and the gentlemen took their seats strictly according to families, and a precedence long since settled with bare steel. In the minstrel's gallery of the great hall the harpers had put away their wrests and now, as the Chief entered, leading his guests, they struck up the beautiful strains of "*Y Veillionen*," rechristened by them "Sir Watkin's Delight."

A hundred tall candles shed their glow over a hundred gallant guests, and a hundred liveried servingmen hastened to wait upon them.

Behind the chair of each Welsh gentleman stood his private servant, belted and weaponed as if for a fray—that meal was to be at no mercy of any sudden troop of horse which Whig justices might send.

Iolyn had stationed himself behind Pengraig, and Meredith had borrowed a man from his kindred,

while, half way along the board, the chair of Gwgan Maddox was shadowed by the suet face of the servant he had spoken of; a fellow whom no one present had ever seen before except Iolyn. It need hardly be said that the latter had harboured suspicion and a virulent dislike of this fellow from the first, and that, as the meal wore on, he watched him with the keenness of a hawk.

“He is fixing in his mind the features of every gentleman here,” muttered Iolyn, as he saw the fishlike eyes wander in furtive eagerness from face to face.

In the whispers which passed between master and man he read black treachery, and when at last the cloth was drawn and the harps paused for the toasts, he ground his teeth as the fellow strained his cod-fish gaze upon the host himself.

“I tell you, sir,” whispered the lad angrily in Pengraig’s ear; “that lackey of Maddox’s is a spy from Newcastle’s. He should be hanged in the doorway for a warning to his master. Shall I not throw him out of the door at least?”

“And have me out upon the grass at break of day to satisfy the insult to the head of his master’s kindred. Foh! Maddox is not my ward to-night, but a gentleman of the Tribe of Iestyn; and to

touch his servant is to affront the tribe. Let be; you are mistaken. See! Sir Watkin rises."

Iolyn could not continue, for the Chief was on his feet to speak. "Gentlemen all," he cried,—using English for the sake of Lord Barrymore and his friends—"empty your glasses now and let old Martin fill them for a toast—though first I have a few words to say. No, gentlemen, not in any wine now upon the table; but a special wine which I have kept against this moment, from the first day I came to Wynstay till now. And let old Martin fill it. Now gentlemen; now Martin." *

A silence fell upon the hall, for every man present knew what manner of declaration was coming. Then Sir Watkin lifted his face to speak, but before the words could come "*Da' daint rhag tafod*" cried Iolyn, in a voice that rang through the hall; quoting the proverb which says that the tongue is best between the teeth when words are dangerous to utter. "There is a spy here in the hall."

The Chief paused in sharp surprise, while Pengraig sprang up in quick anger. "It is a mistake of Iolyn's," cried the latter.

"Oh! Iolyn is it?" put in Sir Watkin at once. "Nay, lad, the time for circumspection is past.

* The office of butler is hereditary in this family.

Hearken and I'll quote another proverb. 'The secret of three men a hundred will straightway know of.' "

"And I another," answered Iolyn. "A house is easier burnt than built."

"And while you stand exchanging proverbs, burst out Pengraig impatiently; "I will give you the prince of them all—one that is often in the mouth of the lord of Wynstay—'*Gwell angau na chywilydd*,' 'Better death than shame.' " *

"I am done," said Iolyn; "but I will not forget the spy."

"That is well then," said Sir Watkin. "We leave him to thee, Iolyn. One stroke of that bido-gan at thy belt will shrive all treachery in any spy. But—and this is to you all, gentlemen, as well as to one—thank God the time has come when we need no longer speak darkly or deal in hints."

"But to my speech. You know that we of the Jacobites, in all our offers to the court of King James the third—God save him!—have always stipulated that he should send over not less than a certain number of continental troops to head any rising on our part. There were other stipulations, too, all of them born of bitter experience in the past, or the

* Now the proud motto of the Welsh Regiment.

fruit of grey wisdom in the present. Well, all these stipulations are come to nothing, and the young Prince of Wales, Charles Edward, setting everything at defiance, has landed in Scotland, as we all know.

“Wise or unwise, we must remember that he is young and gallant, full of proud spirit and heroic ambitions, as he so notably showed when he said that he would win his father’s throne by the swords of his father’s subjects alone. He is now marching south to enter England and it behoves us to make up our minds to-night on which side we are to draw. Therefore, gentlemen, I will give you a toast, and if any one of you here cannot, upon his honour, drink it with me, then I give him leave and liberty to withdraw, and pledge him safe escort to his own hall. You know the toast, does any man withdraw?”

No one rose; no one spoke. One glance round the board, and then all eyes were back again upon the Chief’s face. And he; his kindling eye went round the company till it filled with moisture, and a huskiness came into his voice which yet could not shake the power of it as he lifted his glass into the light and gave the words. “And now, for every gallant gentleman who loves his rightful Prince and holds his honour above all else; this is the toast.

Here is—to the King across the water—to the Prince across the border—to the dear White Rose of Arno and the day of Victory.”

Down rang each cup upon the board as the draught was drained, and then out flashed a hundred swords while a clamour of bursting cheers shook the shadows above, and many an ancient battle cry went up from the lips of chiefs whose right to them was drawn through thrice three hundred years of named and known ancestors.

“ King James! God bless him!” wept the grey old Earl of Barrymore; the hopes of years of self-denial picturing their near fulfilment to his mind’s fond vision.

It needed long, happy minutes and many a hard-wrung handshake; yea, even the dashing away of open tears, before there was quietness round the board again. Then Sir Watkin held up his hand for silence, the while he made a sign to Pengraig.

Rising then, the latter addressed the board. “ I merely wish, gentlemen, to give you an outline of the position. As you all know, I come here from the Duke of Beaufort and speak for South Wales. To-morrow I start north to the Prince, deputed to speak for North Wales also. As soon as I see the Prince I am to offer him the allegiance of our whole

land, and to say that we are ready and eager to do his bidding and to spend the last coin in our purse and the last drop in our hearts for his Royal father and for him.

“ I myself shall remain with the Prince, but I take one gentleman with me, Presgwyn here, who will at once mount and bring back the answer and commands of His Royal Highness to you, with all speed possible.”

A tremendous burst of cheering rose again as Pengraig sat down, and, at the fag end of it, Ellis of Croesnewydd struck up the fag end of a Jacobite ballad.

“ Nay, not that,” cried half a dozen voices at once. “ The Prince *is* come at last, so let us have a new one to fit us. A new one! Who will sing us a new one ?”

“ Pengraig will,” laughed Sir Watkin above the din. “ He is a bard; he shall be our clark to-night! Now then, gentlemen, give him no peace till he complies.”

“ Why, that is hard on a poor lawyer of fifty,” returned Pengraig merrily. “ But if I must, then I must, so listen all of you.”

Then giving the word to the chief harper to strike up a well known air he waited for the first note to

commence that song which, grievously spoilt and altered to suit more hopeless times, was to linger mournfully down to our own day. But to that night and that company the future was mercifully shut out, and so the rafters rang, time and again to the chorus—

“ Then I give you a toast—
The Prince whom we boast :
And he who refuses, a traitor we'll mark—
Here's a health to the Rose
The rarest that blows
And so sings the chorus of Robin John, Clark.”

CHAPTER VI

WHILE the song and chorus were still making merry with the echoes of the roof-tree, Pengraig bethought him of a pamphlet left in his valise, and promptly despatched Iolyn to fetch it. Short time as the lad was gone it was yet long enough for John Chapel, servant to Maddox, to disappear in; as if he, too, were gone upon an errand.

Thus, when Iolyn returned, his first word to Pengraig was a hot demand to know what had become of the spy.

“What! Still harping on the spy? Pooh! some private errand of his master. What else? Sit down, lad. Here, take a mouthful of wine and let your heart rest for one short hour at least: we shall have sharp times enough from to-morrow on.”

But Iolyn was not to be comforted. “I will hunt him up. Sir Watkin left the spy to me, and I said that I would watch him. I am off.”

Pengraig watched him go, musing the while upon the lad's suspicions. “No, no,” he said at last, half aloud, “it is some mistake of his; most likely

born of his virulent hatred for Maddox. No matter the odds I cannot offend the whole tribe for a mere suspicion. And, in any case, we are up to win a crown, and only that way to cheat a scaffold. So——”

Two minutes later he was deep in sober discussions and plannings with Sir Watkin and Lord Barrymore, weighing and deducing amidst the multifarious details of their enterprise; seeking the surest line to follow.

The furtive eye of Maddox had watched him narrowly from the moment of Iolyn's departure, and now, as soon as he saw him so engrossed, he himself rose and left the hall.

Stealing by devious rooms and corridors he reached a window opening upon the garden at one end of the house. “This will do,” muttered he as he glanced about. “By getting out here I shall avoid that pike-eyed porter at the entrance; and then if anyone enquires for me before I come back, the porter will say that I am somewhere in the house, since he can swear I never passed him. Their idiotic old custom of a door porter will thus benefit me.”

Slipping out into the garden he stole along in the shadows till he came to the patch of open moon-

light intervening betwixt the ha-ha fence and a funeral tufted cedar, some thirty yards away. Here a low whistle from him evoked an answer from the velvety blackness of the cedar's shadow, and Maddox smiled a little as he heard it. "What a clever rogue it is. I made no mistake when I chose him."

A little cloud was just upon the moon's edge. Waiting a moment for it fully to veil the face of night's white lamp, Maddox took advantage of the gloom to cross to the tree where Chapel awaited him.

"You managed to get clear then, without being seen?" queried the master.

"Trust me. The grooms are more than half drunk. What a place this is for what they call hospitality!" answered the servant in a voice that struck his master as more than ever unpleasant.

For Chapel was a villain with a voice which was now a whine and now a whistle; with the whine liable to be modified into a sycophantic sneer veiling an unctuous insolence; and the whistle to become a shrill scream or ear piercing shriek. At present it was a sickening whine.

"Very well," returned Maddox. "I am glad no one saw you, because I want to speak on partic-

ular matters. You remember, I suppose, what I hinted at when I took you into my service?"

"La! sir, no, sir. You spoke so nice and kind to me that I forgot. Besides, do you mean on this job or the other one?"

"Humph! deuce take you with your 'other one.' I mean this one and, as you've forgotten, I'll repeat it for your benefit. I said that we were going upon rather a dangerous errand, but that, as your neck was already forfeit to the law——"

"Don't, sir," interposed Chapel, as if squirming with dread. "You make me feel again just as I did when old Clinkley found out that the bills were forged, and before he knew that I had only written the body of them, and that it was you alone who had forged your guardian's name."

In that darkness, Maddox, unable to read the other's face, could only guess as to whether the thrust was mere stupidity or cunning. But the creeping voice went through his bones, chilling them to the very marrow. He cast a scared glance around, as if in dread lest someone should have overheard the words. Then with a half gasp of relief:

"Listen, my most excellent and worthy Chapel," said he. "Whether you are more knave or fool is

all one, but I warn you that if ever you allude again, in any way or for any reason, to that business of the bills, I'll tie you up and kill you by inches. Do you understand?"

He reached out to seize the other's coat and shake him by way of emphasis, but instantly found his own hand seized in a grasp that astonished him.

"I do sir and I thank you kindly sir," responded Chapel, with an unctuous whine, while he shook the hand—which he had already gripped to a jelly—with an effusiveness that brought tears of torture to the other's eyes.

"O-oh! d——n you!" at last ejaculated Maddox, snatching out a pistol with his left hand. "Let go, you bedlamite! or I'll blow you to——"

"Oh please sir, do point that the other way," cried Chapel in a shrill whine, as if taken with a new paroxysm of terror. "Please sir; the other way sir. I am so mortal feared of weapons!" As he spoke he twisted the weapon from the other's weak grasp as easily as if from the fingers of a baby.

A cold chill crept along the backbone of Maddox as he began to recognize the new figure of his "servant." The whine went through him like a knife.

"But you were going to tell me something, sir," went on the voice, now dropped to a fawning tone,

no whit less dreadful to the listener. "I'd forgotten, and you were going to repeat it—go on, sir."

Maddox went on, for in the blackness he could not make sure as to what the hand which had taken the pistol was now doing.

"I was just saying that if the affair was risky the pay was high, and that if you were called on to do any special job you would find me no niggard in special rewards."

"To be sure, sir, you did say that the pay was high. And I believed you, for didn't you have at that very minute the thousand guineas, which the Secretary gave you, all safe locked in a box; besides the order guaranteeing you free from arrest till further orders."

Maddox felt his hair stirring. "How did you know that?" demanded he faintly. "Who told you?"

"Why, didn't you show me the key yourself?" returned Chapel in a surprised whine.

"I did not!" snapped the other in savage reaction. "You know that you lie when you say that I did."

"Then I must have dreamed it. It's wonderful, isn't it, sir, that I should have a dream like that? And true, too—wonderful!"

"Enough!" put in Maddox. "I see you know. But one thing your dream left out, and that was that five hundred pounds of that thousand went towards staving off Clinkley for the bills *we* forged." The last two words came with a bitter sneer.

"Ah, sir, but there is still the other five hundred. And even if that were gone you can always get more where that came from—enough to pay my little wages at any rate."

"I understand," returned Maddox with chilly doggedness. "I quite follow you. You are the prettiest villain I ever knew."

"Oh, don't say that, sir. It wasn't I who forged my guardian's name to such a tune, and then wanted to marry that guardian's daughter, so that he couldn't prosecute me for shame of the daughter. No more did I pretend to be a Tory, so as to betray him to the Government if no better way offered of staving it off——"

"No, it wasn't you," sneered Maddox to the whine, for he was desperate now. "You were, of course, quite innocent of the half dozen crimes for which you were to have been hung, if I had not stopped the warrant in the very shadow of the gallows."

"Of course I was innocent, sir,"—insolence

crawling through every tone of the whine—"that is why such an honourable gentleman as you interfered so that such a nice penman as myself should not be lost. And didn't I pay you back when I wrote the bills? And then I became your servant because you promised me such good wages, sir. So like your generosity."

"You became my servant," retorted the other, "because your safety lay with me. And now you will continue my servant—and my humble servant too—because I arranged, before leaving town, that if anything happened to me, no matter by whose hand or in what way, the warrant for you was to be put into execution at once. Moreover, the other five hundred of the thousand is then to come into use at once to back the warrant; four hundred as reward for your arrest, and one to pay the expenses of running you down. I don't think that that was in your dream, Mr. Chapel; wonderful a dream as it was and all. Eh?"

"He! he! how very funny that my dream should leave that out now," panted Chapel, his voice a whisper and yet still a scream. "But suppose I were to go into the hall there and prove that you were a spy. Then I should be taken on as a good Jacobite and so come to a rise in the world."

"You would," snarled Maddox, "and a sharp rise too. You see you do not understand the foolish, uncivilized customs of these idiotic Welsh. If you were to denounce me, my kindred, that is my tribe—what benighted savages!—would immediately hurry you to the nearest tree, because I should say that you really were a spy—the one whom Iolyn meant.

"And if anyone had a lingering suspicion of me, then the imbecile head of my bedlamite tribe would straightway become surety for me, and all that I should have to do would be to continue Tory as I am now."

"Tory!"

"Yes; Tory! I suppose you find it difficult to believe that I have turned Tory in earnest, so as to earn the forgiveness of my guardian and win the regard of that guardian's daughter? What do you say to that?"

"Why, I say that it is a pity that you did not begin earlier to win the lady's regard at least, since someone else seems to have done a good deal in that direction already. But you were going to tell me of something you wanted done: go on sir."

"I will: you have hit upon the point too: it is just that someone else whom you have mentioned."

"Aye, I thought so. And so you want him put away, I suppose"—the words seemed to roll in oil as they came whining out.

"Ha! I'll warrant you think it's murder; like one of your own jobs," sneered Maddox.

"Well, you might have some other name for it, but, being a plain man, I have only a plain name for it. But what of that, the man it's for will be as dead under one name as another in the end."

"Nothing of the kind: nothing so coarse. You show what a pitiful commonplace villain you are—and, besides, that sort of thing always fails in the finish. No, I'm Tory in earnest now and what I want is that this someone else shall be made to appear *not* a Tory in earnest, but a spy in fact."

"Oh, I see, sir. We are to do a little more pen work. Forge a few documents to be found in his pockets. Heads of plots; lists of names, and such like reports to the Government."

"There you go again, with your slum and gutter notions. It doesn't occur to you that both he and his movements are far too well known for anything so crude. But I have a plan that really has some sense about it. You heard in the hall how that he, Meredith, is to carry the despatches from the

Prince to Sir Watkin here? Now in coming back through Lancashire, he will head for Warrington Bridge, and then keep Delamere Forest between him and Chester, for fear Lord Cholmondeley's patrols pick him up in passing. Very well,—what is wanted is this. You must nab him on the road and get the despatches he carries. Then you will dress in his clothes, mount his horse, and proceed straight to the Duke of Cumberland's headquarters; passing yourself off as Meredith.

“ You will there act as though you were the real man turned traitor and playing the spy on his own Jacobites. I will give you a note to Weir, the Duke's chief spy, and he will help you to pass the business off. You will stop there one day and then will disappear completely. Changing back to your own horse and clothing, you will return to me here, bringing with you such proofs as Weir can furnish you with, as, for instance, the despatches themselves with the Duke's endorsement on them; or the report of the proceedings of his council of war upon them, and such like things.

“ These you will bring to me secretly and I will find means to make them known to Sir Watkin. Then there will be a fine to do here and I will volunteer to ride at once to the Prince and explain

the treason of Meredith and ask for new despatches—what do you think of that for a plan, eh?”

“Why, sir, it’s like my dream; it’s wonderful! It’s also like my dream because it’s left something out—something essential, too. What about the real Meredith all this time? You said he was not to be murdered,” purred Chapel.

“Nor is he,” replied Maddox coolly, his self-assurance clothing him once again as he thought of his own cleverness. “No, no, murder will out, and I’ll not have any country chawbacon of a Justice tying a murdered corpse round my neck. So what you have to do is this. Delamere Forest is full of rogues who prey on the travellers crossing Warrington Bridge. You must get four or five of the stiffest of them and snap up your man as he comes this side the bridge. After stripping him you will tie him hand and foot; securely gag him, and then load him into a country cart; covering him with some sort of chawbacon wares that will not smother him. Then you will see that your highwaymen drive him to the Duke’s headquarters. You of course will ride on before and when you have done your business there and disappeared, you will meet your cart, which, being slow, will not yet have arrived. Take your man on then somewhere south of headquarters

and there at the handiest cross-roads let him commit suicide by hanging—you catch the idea ?”

“ I said it would come out to the same thing in the end,” purred Chapel. “ I called it murder and you call it suicide: but it’s all the same. And it does you credit indeed. But what of the five footpads ? They will want money, sir, and plenty of it.”

“ You shall have plenty. Above all however you must see to it that they do not know who the man is that they are carting. Make up some cock and bull story to tell them, and then if you can see your way to getting them all hung immediately after the business, do so. But don’t waste time on them. Whisper a word of highwaymen in some constable’s ear and then slip off.

“ Now do you quite understand everything you have to do ?” ended Maddox.

“ Quite, sir,” answered Chapel, in a whine all vibrant with unholy admiration. “ I am to get a few footpads together and waylay and capture this Meredith as he comes across Warrington Bridge. Then I am to take his papers, dress in his clothes and appear at the Duke of Cumberland’s headquarters as Meredith turned traitor. Then as soon as the news of that has got into men’s mouths I am

to vanish from the Duke's camp, find my footpads who have been keeping the real Meredith close and then hang him in such a manner as will leave the world to think that he committed suicide. After that I am to come here and let you know how the thing went and give you the proper proofs so that you can go courting the woman who loved him. Oh, it does you credit, sir: credit;" and the rest was a chuckle that chilled Maddox to the bone.

CHAPTER VII

IN spite of the lateness of their potations, the gentlemen of the Cycle, together with their host and fellow guests, were early astir next morning. A mighty breakfast found them a company of as goodly trenchermen as ever lightened a board, and the wit was as fresh over morning ale as over evening wine. One person, however, dallied no long time over it, and that one was Ithel.

The sun was barely up when he took his way across the lawn and through the wood towards the great oak of yesterday's consecrating. But when he came to the edge of the glade he started in quick astonishment, for there, in the same spot as yesterday, was the same figure of Mari. To-day there was no mistaking the condition of her mind, for she was weeping openly and sharp sobs were shaking her slender frame as he ran to take her in his arms.

"Mari! Mari! what is it, dear love? and what are you here for, so early in the morning, sweet heart?"

"Oh! I am wailing; wailing for all my love that is in jeopardy. I am wailing and bewailing that

wars should ever be!" cried Mari, in sorrowful literalness wailing indeed.

Holding her close: "Why, dear one," answered he; "there must be wars while there are men on earth. And if ever there were a just war since wars began, this rising of ours is just. But I fear me you are a Whig," ended he in gentle raillery, the tone of which was a caress itself.

"A Whig!" sobbed she; "Oh what are all your politics to women? A woman's politics are the man she loves. Yesterday my politics were all my father. To-day they are more than double the wider, for they are you above all. What will it profit me who sits on the throne if I lose you in the deciding? Nay, I am a woman and, being so, all my politics is to have you safe to me. All my defeat would be to lose you; all my victory to have you. And since I have you now, how can I long for any change of kings, when change means risking you?"

"But would you have me draw back now and forswear myself?" said Ithel. "Could you love a man forsworn, Mari?"

"Not forsworn; you would be keeping faith and troth the rather. For did you not swear your faith to me but yesterday? and does not that faith override all other faiths?"

"Aye, in a woman, sweet. Love is a woman's country, faith and king. It would be high treason and rank rebellion in her if she defied her love, and did let any other promise come between. But with a man, next after his faith in God comes his duty to his country, and if that duty calls him from the arms of her he loves it still must be obeyed."

"Yes, if that duty be to keep the country from a foreign foe. But this is merely as to whether George or James shall wear a crown and be a king!"

"Merely! it is a question of faith and right and honour; and the man who is not moved by such high forces is not fit to be beloved of a woman. The fact that I am ready to risk all for them is the best warranty that you could have that I shall continue true to you, sweet one."

"I want no warranty. I want only you. Give me your arms about me and I'll ask no other warranty, save that you call me 'sweet one.'"

"I should not dare to touch you or to use such terms to you, if I could sit still while other men went out to fight for the right. Nay, nay, sweet, think no more of sorrows that may never fall. Think only that I love you and that, come success or come defeat, I still shall love you and you only."

And thus the warm debate died out in sighs and

soft caresses till presently Mari grew calmer and with the calmness her natural high spirit came again. And, as the minutes stole on, so word by word and tone by tone she steeled herself to the final agony, when, returning to the lawn, she found her father and Iolyn ready mounted, with Ithel's horse beside them.

Then after the parting she stood and watched them go till the trees of the avenue hid them from sight. She saw the face of Iolyn as he turned in the saddle for another latest glance at her: she saw the wave of her father's hand in final farewell; and more than all she saw how Ithel checked as he took off his hat in the sweeping salute which was a last insistent reiteration of his lover's protestations to her.

And then tears only to comfort her distress.

For the first few miles of the ride not a single word passed amongst our three riders. Iolyn was savage and sullen at having to leave Wynstay without discovering Chapel. When he left the hall to search for Maddox's servant he had spent a full hour, roaming like a hungry wolf inside the house and out. Then he plunged stubbornly into the wood, hoping to chance upon him there; coming back, drenched with the moisture of a November

night, only to find that Chapel was still a-missing. His first quest when the household rose was to discover some trace of the man and he was furious when one of the stable lads informed him that Chapel had already ridden away in company with one of the servants of Coed Cynan; the *Pencenedl* or chief to Maddox.

“ That is some trick of Gwgan Maddox,” gnashed Iolyn to himself, as he turned away at last. And he was right, for Maddox had adopted this way of getting his accomplice safely away from Wynstay, before Iolyn’s persistency should land him into any awkward investigations.

But while Iolyn was silent from baffled suspicion, and Ithel from thinking of Mari, Pengraig himself was silent from a cause equally characteristic. Now at length the dream of his life seemed drawing to realization. The fact that he himself was, in some sort, riding as ambassador from his native country to offer its allegiance to its rightful prince, elated him only in so far as it gave him an active share in hastening forward a long yearned for consummation. Just for this one morning hour the restless energy of his nature lay, quiescently captive, under the trailing clouds of his poetic fancies as his imagination swept on flame-flighted pinions to a prospect

of rainbow brilliance. His heart was full of music and the blood in his veins was like wine. No wonder that he was silent, or that his eyes were moist. He was tasting that rarest vintage which ever comes from the winepress of Life: he was at that point when Hope dazzles warm endeavour with the gleaming lines of near fulfilment; when all that intervenes seems but a single smooth stride; one stride; one only—alas! that the stride just taken should have already topped the summit of all the pleasure which pursuit may ever know.

Thus for the present he rode, silent from pure happiness; and so, until the day had warmed to noon, no word had passed amongst the three. The need for baiting the horses, however, broke the web of each man's thoughts, and thereafter their separate feelings closed into a single state of satisfaction as on every hand they noted how little active opposition there was to the notion of the Pretender's advance. Saving that Lord Cholmondeley had occupied Chester for the Government and that thus the old city which held out so gallantly for Charles I. now shut its gates against his high-spirited young descendant, there was scarcely the colour of antagonism. What stir there was seemed wholly that of the Jacobites themselves, who now no longer drank

with closed doors and significant winks intended to indicate "the King over the water," but quaffed it noisily on the village greens from broached barrels of strong October; and found few in their parishes to dispute the toast or refuse the ale.

And not in Cheshire alone did they find these things. They took their way without haste, because haste was useless, and when, next day, they crossed into Lancashire, there was every indication of active rising, in the furbishing up of blunderbusses and the fitting together of antiquated pikes. It was the afternoon of the 27th of November when at length they sighted proud Preston—town of ill omen to the Stuart cause—and presently drew rein in the midst of an advance guard, which Lord George Murray, in order to break the superstition of the Highlanders, had led across to the southern bank of the Ribble. Here Pengraig dismounted, Ithel following suit, and while Iolyn led the horses on into the town to find quarters, the former turned to make enquiries and glean what information he could from the officer in command.

This officer proved to be none other than Lord George himself, ablest of the Jacobite generals and, possibly, most ambitious. He was to the full as eager for information as the other, and drawing him

a little way apart at once desired to know the prospects in front—"For the country does not rise to us as we were led to expect," said he.

"Perhaps not, as yet," returned Pengraig. "But then, it has not risen against you either. Once we reach London, however, the country will see that our cause is no mere matter of words and healths, and then all that is best and bravest in the nation will rally round the heir to our rightful king."

"It is a long way to London," returned Murray, somewhat dubiously.

"But there is no army to bar the way; or none worth speaking of as yet," returned Pengraig.

The other brightened visibly. "If we can only fall upon those troops you hint at, before they can concentrate into too large an army, we may do well yet. I am deeply indebted to you, sir, for your information. But you are going on now, no doubt, to the Prince, whom you will find as eager as yourself for marching forward. And I hope you may not be too busy in future to spare me a little of your conversation."

A few further compliments passed between them before they parted and then Pengraig and Meredith took their way afoot into the town.

CHAPTER VIII

THERE is no need for us to pause here to describe in detail the personal appearance of the gallant young Prince, Charles Edward. Neither was their any need for our two to enquire the whereabouts of his quarters: they had simply to follow the crowd. Half way along, Iolyn was waiting, having already secured quarters and ordered dinner for Pengraig and Presgwyn.

“ Then you had better go dine at once,” said the former to the latter promptly; “ so that you will be able to start again upon the instant as soon as I can bring you the Prince’s letter.”

Accordingly Ithel and Iolyn turned aside to the inn, while Pengraig pursued his way till he came to where the crowd blocked all the roads about the window at which the Prince sat. Two pipers of the Macdonalds made music beneath it, while a cluster of clansmen, gentlemen chiefly, gathered about the doorway in place of a more formal guard. To the one who appeared to be chief of these Pengraig addressed himself with due compliment and, courte-

ously stating his errand, presently found himself ushered with all ceremony into the presence of the Prince for whom he was to suffer so much and so bravely.

Charles Edward knew well, by fame and letter, who this man was now entering to him; and thus he looked with some natural interest upon one whose vigorous urgings to immediate action had so long countenanced his own at the dilatory court of his Royal father. He noted the strong lines of the face, the determined poise of the head, and the open unflinching gaze. He weighed the whole and the whole did more than satisfy him.

“Ah! now we have the first of those gallant gentlemen who are to join us,” said Charles Edward, with a frank smile,—“though still your coming argues nothing as to what others will do, since well I know that even if all others turned their backs on me yet David ApThomas Morgan of Pengraig would still keep his faith and join me.”

With the first sentence the other had opened his lips to reply, but when the Prince with princely tact named him in full, he checked and caught his breath again. His was no wild fire of boyish sentiment. His was the settled faith of a man long past the day of unstable purposes and flickering,

will-o'-the-wisp desires. All the long years of the soul deadening atmosphere of the law had not dimmed the steadfast flame of his Jacobite loyalty. And now, come face to face thus with the symbol of all he held in veneration, and then to be greeted in his native name—dearest weakness of a Welshman—he stood upright, lips close and head erect, with a shudder of emotion thrilling every fibre of his frame.

Charles Edward saw it and a soft light shone in his face as he took a stride forward, saying gently: “You have travelled far, but you are welcome at the end.”

With a strong effort to control his feelings the other managed to speak. “Yea, I do believe your Royal Highness, and I thank you for it. But, sir, I do not come here only as a loyal subject; I come here from His Grace the Duke of Beaufort and from Sir Watkin Williams Wyn, to tender the allegiance of your own principality of Wales. I am to say”—his voice rose with the words—“that all its manhood awaits only your call to come out to follow you; to victory, we pray; but to death if need be!”

The eyes of the Prince kindled as he listened. Turning to the Chiefs and nobles who surrounded him: “There, gentlemen!” cried he. “What did

I tell you ? Did I not promise you that our advance would rally an army to our standards ? And here is the confirmation of my argument, word for very word, as if some herald repeated a proclamation."

Then to Pengraig he went on again: "I cannot say that you are more welcome for your words, but I can at least thank you yet more for them, coming, as they do, here in a place which has impressed some of our army as one of ill omen.

"But what now is your further advice, put into a sentence ? I know you have summed up the situation ere this."

"Yea, your Royal Highness, and therefore I give it in a line. Forward is your word and London is your object."

"Again, gentlemen!" cried Charles Edward gaily: "my very words again. Nay, never shake your heads and mutter; we must go forward now; we cannot turn back after this. Is there anything else, good counsellor from in front—for you shall be my counsellor; I love such counsel—is there any other thing your knowledge can suggest ?"

"Nothing, your Royal Highness, saving that no time be lost on the march; and that you instantly beat up for all possible recruits. Has there been any recruiting yet ?" ended he.

"Has there?" repeated the Prince, passing the interrogation on to his secretary, Murray of Broughton.

"I believe not, your Royal Highness," answered the secretary.

"Then it should be done at once," replied Pengraig to him instantly, the energy of his nature catching with relief at the opportunity for action.

"Yes, let it be done at once," assented Charles Edward.

Lord Elcho and another moved immediately to obey, and Pengraig made as if to accompany them. "Nay, not yet, counsellor," interposed the Prince smilingly; "I have not yet heard the details of what Wales offers. How shall I know what to answer if I am left dark?"

"I crave your pardon, sir, and truly I am a sorry ambassador," returned Pengraig; "but my feet are ever in a fever to be moving about your work——"

"Enough; enough," broke in the Prince. "And as you have ridden so far you shall come into my cabinet here and take a mouthful of wine the while you fill my ears with the plans of my own country. Come;" ended he, leading the way, as he spoke, to the adjoining room.

Losing no point that could be made; missing no detail which could impress; Pengraig recounted what had been agreed upon at Wynstay; reinforcing the whole with evidence and proof drawn from his wide knowledge of the country and his endless information as one of the most active of the conspirators.

“And now,” concluded he, “if your Royal Highness will but give me your commands, I will at once transmit them to Wynstay by a sure and speedy hand.”

“Then let Sir Watkin gather his people at once and be ready to join us as we march south. You yourself know better what our route should be and what point they should strike for. What do you advise?”

“This, sir. As speed is one main factor of success for you, the less you deviate from the straightest line to London, the better. That straightest line lies through Manchester, Macclesfield, and Derby. Now let Sir Watkin rise and push across Cheshire to strike your march somewhere between the two latter towns; say at Leek or Ashbourn, according to the roads. At the same time the Duke of Beaufort should rise and seize Bristol and so secure the West country. Thus your own army

will not lose a day and so may brush through to its goal before any opposition can concentrate to bar the way. Such, in full, is my poor advice, your Royal Highness."

"And the best that I could have, for it smacks of success," answered Charles Edward readily. "Write my commands, therefore, just as you have indicated and let your messenger be sure and speedy. Have you a cipher for your communications? I confess I cannot assist you to one if you have none."

"No cipher, your Royal Highness; but I will e'en copy your own example when you corresponded with your royal father. Trust me for an ambiguity that shall be as innocent as mothers' milk, until the messenger shall choose to expound it to the proper persons."

Fifteen minutes later the Prince's eyes were sparkling with enjoyment as he read the script with which the other presented him. "Why, you have copied me to the very life," exclaimed he merrily. "Yea here is the selfsame name* which I myself used to indicate my identity to my father. It is the very thing!"

* The reader may find specimens of the letters alluded to above, in the "Stuart Papers" and elsewhere.

The letter which so tickled his youthful exuberance, ran as ambiguously follows:

“ To the Manager of the Cycle Company of Merchant Adventurers.

“ MOST HONOUR'D SIR,—“ As you have expressed your desire to take the present opportunity of paying all your debts and obligations, due to the old-established house of Norry & Son; this is to notify you that Howell, the representative of that House, is now on his way to London, with all possible haste, and desires you to meet him on the way thither, at Leek or Ashborne, on the second or third of December, whichever may be most convenient to you—but you are to be sure of being in time. And Howell further says that you are to come, bringing with you all that you can possibly raise, by hook or crook,—whereby he hopes the ledger may be balanced to your credit and future drafts by you upon Norry & Son be honoured with all promptness and pleasure. Signed——”

“ Nay,” broke off the Prince; “ give me the pen and I will sign it,” and stooping to the board he wrote in his untutored hand the one word, “ Howell.”

“ But what says the Post Scriptum ?” he went on, taking up the reading again.

“ P.S. The firm's affairs appear to be in a most

flourishing condition and any of your friends who may be hesitating between it and its rival would do well to lose no time in opening an account with Howell."

"Why now," smiled Charles Edward, as he ended, "this is as honest a letter as any easy Justice might wish to see. Well, well, when I wrote Howell before, it was as an honest yeoman farmer, and here I am become a prosperous merchant's factor. Egad! I rise in the world as I grow older."

"I will not say, 'please God you may,' answered Pengraig. "Higher you cannot rise, save to your father's throne: but, I will say 'please God you come by your own' and that right shortly." And with such grave compliment he took his leave and way to instruct and start Meredith.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN Ithel had thoroughly grasped the instructions with which Pengraig charged him, clause by clause, like a catechism; the last word as he spurred away was still a repetition of the first injunction, "Trust nobody and keep your pistols primed. Above all, be swift."

Therefore, with one change of horses at Wigan, he came splashing through the muddy streets of Warrington at dead of night, hoping to be over the bridge and well beyond reach of Delamere Forest long before break of day. So sure was he in his hope, that all his attention was taken up with suspicious scanning of the deeper shadows on either hand as he leaned forward, finger on trigger and spurs ready for a dash away at the slightest sign of ambush. Then a sudden snort from the horse closed his knees instinctively like a vice, just in time to save his seat as the startled animal swerved violently round and away from the ragged edge over which the next stride would have landed him.

His rider did not swear; a long breath and a quiet

sigh of thankfulness escaped him instead, for where the bridge had been was nothing now save the shattered masonry of the opposing abutments, with the river slipping oilily between, grey and sullen under the rays of the moon. Bringing his horse up he pressed slowly forward again, soothing and patting the animal's crest, till he pulled up in the white moonlight on the broken bridge end. Hardly had he time however, fully to realize the check, when a sharp challenge rang out from the dense shadows of the farther bank, followed instantly by a couple of musket shots, warning him that not the river alone barred his way.

As the bullets droned past his ears, "Phew! the shadows are a better council chamber," quoth Ithel, wheeling about and dashing back for the black mouth of the street.

So sharply did he go that he almost rode down a man standing in the middle of the road; only the metal button of the man's hat, flashing silver as he raised his face, sufficing to startle the already scared horse into shying again.

"Who the devil are you?" cried the rider angrily as he controlled his beast again. "And if you mean mischief you had better begin; you rascally Jack-Andrew, you!"—cocking a drawn pistol as he ended.

"If Aw'd wanted mischief, lad," answered the other coolly; "Aw could ha' done it while thou wert moonrakin' on th' bridge eend. But Aw'm as honest as thee, or any other mon as rides this gate fro' Wigan at this time o' neet, mucked up fro' heel to hat wi' slutch (mud) as thou art."

"Then what are you doing here in the street when everyone else is abed?" retorted Ithel.

"What art *thou* doing?" returned the other doggedly.

"Riding about my business," replied Ithel, still sharply.

"And Aw'm standin' about mine," capped the fellow with the evidence of a grin in his tone.

"But, come now," he went on, "Aw'll tell thee a gradely* tale for once, for thou'rt a farrantly lad by th' sound o' thee. Aw were uset to be th' bridge tenter here, till thoose dal'd sodgers broke it down this mornin'; for fear this new Prince should use it for marchin' into Wales."

"Then you know the river well?" insinuated Ithel.

* Gradely. This word is probably not more than a few centuries old. Its meaning is to be up to grade (the highest grade) in a (cloth) merchant's sense of the word. It has, however, expanded so as almost completely to oust the old word of "proper," as in "a proper man"; though the latter still survives in some districts.

“ Ne’r a mon bettther. Aw’re noan born here—my talk ’ll tell thee ’at Aw come fro’ th’ tother side o’ Owdham—but Aw’ve lif’t here long enoof to know every turn and tide on’t fro’ th’ tone eend to th’ tother,” replied the man readily.

“ Well, these soldiers appear to have done you harm, just as they have done me harm, by breaking the bridge. But I am in a hurry to cross, so you have a chance to earn more as a ferryman than you did as a bridge keeper. What will you take to put me across on the other side; somewhere wide of these marauding soldiers ?”

“ What wilt t’a give ?”

“ A guinea,” returned Ithel promptly.

“ Then thou’lt tarry on this side till somebody else tak’s thee o’er,” returned the other just as promptly. “ Dost ta think Aw’m bound to risk bein’ shot, an’ walk hauve-a-dozen mile into th’ bargain, for a guinea? An’ Aw’ve said naught about payin’ for the boat when we come to it, oather.”

“ Oh, I’ll pay for the boat.”

“ Aye, an’ pay rarely too, Aw’ll be bound!” chuckled the man. “ Aw should ha’ saved thee summat theer.”

“ Ah,” returned Ithel drily. “ I see. You wish

to fleece me yourself, but don't wish anyone else to do it; eh?"

"We sayen i' Lancashire 'at two of a trade ne'er thriven together," retorted the other with grim amusement in his voice.

"Oh! that is cool enough at any rate. But come, you have told me what you will not do it for; now let us hear what you will do it for?"

"Happen (mayhap) four guineas 'll do me," suggested the man.

"Happen I'll see you hanged first," retorted Ithel, who feared that compliance with such extortion might rouse uncontrollable suspicion as to the importance of his errand.

"Well," returned the other leisurely: "Aw've no business on t' tother side just now as Aw know on. But Aw'll tell thee, lad, 'at here i' Lancashire folk gi'en naught for naught an' dal'd little for a penny."

"Look here," broke out Ithel; "I'll give you thirty shillings."

"Say three guineas."

"No, but I'll come up to two pounds."

"Mak' it guineas."

"Very well," agreed Ithel.

"Show thy brass then," said the bridge tender.

"There it is," answered Ithel showing the gold at arm's length towards the moon flush at the end of the street.

"Hand it o'er then," quoth the other extending his hand to receive it.

"Ah! no doubt," returned Ithel sarcastically. "You wait till we are in the boat. I'll promise you shall have it then."

The other laughed as if at a good joke. "Come lad; thou'rt none so gawmless* after o'. Weel, Aw'm a yezy† mon an' so Aw'll tak' thy promise. Come this gate (way) then an' follow me."

He strode away with the step of one accustomed to night work and Ithel noted the fact as he put his horse to follow. "Never mind," muttered he: "my business is to get across the Mersey if the Devil himself were ferryman."

As they emerged into the open country the sound of muffled hoofs galloping on ahead came back to them. "What is that?" said Ithel checking to listen as he spoke.

"Happen some sodier, just wakkent up fro' bein' fuddled at some alehouse, an' as feard o'

* Gawmless, gumptionless. Gawm = to understand, to catch the meaning of.

† Yezy = easy: following the rule which gives dyed = dead, yer = hear, yeth = heath, etc.

thee an' me as if we were two rebels. Come on; if he stops we'n shake a stick at him; that'll start him agen; Aw'll warrant."

"My pistol is ready cocked in any case," said Ithel significantly, intending a delicate hint to the guide.

The other stopped, looking him squarely in the face for a matter of a dozen seconds. "Bi th' Mass,* lad, thou art feart after o'."

"Better be sure than sorry," retorted Ithel. "And you may be sure that I'll act upon that motto."

"Aye, weel; ne'er mind. Come on," ended the guide offhandedly, starting forward again.

They moved silently along in the same direction as the river, but at sufficient distance to escape observation from the other bank. Two small streams were at length crossed and Ithel began to grow impatient.

"How much farther is it to this boat of yours?" demanded he.

"Nōne mich. We're comin' nigher,—by degrees, like lawyers go to heaven."

Some distance yet remained to be passed and

* By the Mass! Still one of the commonest forms of oath in some even Protestant districts of Lancashire.

then at last they drew near to the river's edge again and Ithel saw the hut and boat which betokened the existence of a regular ferry. Not checking, the guide strode on up to the hut and kicked loudly at the door. But before any answer could come from within, Ithel's horse broke into a questioning whinny, which was immediately answered from behind the hut, whence presently issued a horse, saddled and bridled and showing wet with sweat that glittered on his coat like hoar frost under the moon.

"This was your fuddled soldier's horse then, was it? And where do you reckon his rider is?" demanded Ithel grimly, levelling the pistol at the guide's body as he ended.

"Not i' this cabin, chuzhow;* so put up thy pistol," answered the guide doggedly.

"It is my own pistol, in my own hand," returned Ithel steadily. "I'll do with it what I will."

"Then do th' rest o' this business thysel'," retorted the other, moving a pace as if to walk off.

"Stop!" commanded Ithel firmly. "Another step and I'll drop you like a partridge. The game is mine now. The two guineas you shall have fair enough; or maybe more if I feel like it on the other

* Chuzhow; often pronounced "shuzheaw" = choose how, *i.e.*, anyhow: at any rate.

side. But just at present I'm your master. Open that door!"

"It's fast."

"Break it in then."

"An' what'll Jone Fidler be doin' while Aw'm breakin' it?"

"That is your affair. I know what I shall be doing if you refuse. Break!"

With half an oath the fellow turned to the door again. "Come on, Jone! Let th' Narker do his own th' best way he can o' th' tother side. We mun be budgin'. Out on't!"

At this speech, sounding so suspicious, Ithel whipped out a second pistol, and when the door opened at the last word, the ferryman, stepping swiftly out with his hand at his belt, found himself covered by one pistol, while the guide, turning with a snap, found the other muzzle grinning within two arm's lengths of his body.

"A pretty pair of rogues to grace a gallows. And I will see that both of you are hanged if I lose much more time over this crossing. Now then, you; bridge keeper as you call yourself; take those pistols out of the ferryman's belt and drop them. Quick! my finger itches on this trigger!"

"No use, Jone. Lev it to th' Narker," growled

the guide; taking out and dropping the two pistols as he spoke.

"Now then, Ferryman, take the other fellow's pistols and drop them with yours. Quick!"

The guide laughed a full strong laugh. "Tak' 'em Jone, an' ha' done wi' it. Bi th' Mass, lad, thou'rt even a gradelier cock than Aw took thee for. Nay, thou may put up thy own pistols now: Aw'll promise to put thee safe across: thou deserves that mich, chuzhow."

"Ah, but first I want to know where the rider of that horse is?"—this to the ferryman.

"How should I know?" growled that worthy.

"Well it is not of interest to me except in one way; but if he starts up from any shadow between this and the other side, then down you go—remember that."

"Weel, if he ne'er gwos down till that," remarked the guide drily; "then he'll be like to stond upreet till he's some an' weary. Cannot ta see, lad, 'at th' little boat's gone fro' this side? Aw reckon that so'dier didno' stop to bargain, like thee, but just paid for a boat wi' a horse. Come on!"

Leading the way as he spoke the guide started for the ferryboat, the ferryman at his heels evidently trying to get close enough to whisper some remon-

strance in his ear. But the other minded it no more than the flapping of a bat's wings. Only when the ferryman would have delayed him from casting off for a moment, he spoke out unconcernedly. "Dal thee! Every tub on its own bottom! Let the Narker try his own hond a bit—or art ta feared o' th' Narker?"

The reply was an indistinct growl, which elicited no other answer from the guide than "Thou art a foo'. Do summat toart puttin' this boat across; or else stond out o' th' gate."

Ithel now dismounted warily, face and pistol both towards the two. He stood in the stern of the boat, watching closely for any sign of treachery. But the guide seemed to be imperturbable in his new good humour, and worked away as if entirely unaware of the pistols. Half way across, Ithel belted one weapon till he could take out two guineas. "Here, you, bridge keeper!" he cried. "Here is your money. Catch!"—tossing the coins into the other's extended hat.

"Weel; bi th' mass!" was all the guide's comment as he pocketed the guineas.

Hardly had the slight shock of touching the other bank quivered through the boat than Ithel was mounted again.

"Ashore! both of you!" he shouted, for he could hear the crash of a breaking hedge just ahead, and voices urging runners to greater speed.

The guide obeyed with a chuckle, but the other hesitated. Instantly Ithel pressed his horse towards him and the black muzzle of the pistol drove him growling back out of the way, while as the hoofs touched land the rider pressed the rowels home and the snorting steed sprang away at top speed.

"That's him!" screamed a voice from the hedge to the right. "Stop him! Stop him!"

"Halt!" shouted a voice in front as the spurred and booted figure of a man leaped the ditch and faced round in the road. "Halt! or I shoot!"

A blunderbuss was in his hand as he staggered upright, but before he could even level it the ball from Ithel's pistol took him in the breast and the next leap of the terrified horse was over his corpse as he dashed on up the road.

But with that leap the first voice from the hedge abreast again screamed "Stop!" and at the same instant a pistol cracked loose, almost within arm's length of Ithel who, as the ball ploughed into his body, sent the spurs home convulsively, driving the

maddened beast with bursting speed out of the reach of pursuit.

Then the figure that had fired the pistol broke through the thorns into the roadway, whining forth a string of horrible blasphemies as he stood looking into the black shadows which had swallowed horse and man from sight.

A voice behind caused him to turn. It was the guide, kneeling beside the corpse and speaking to the ferryman. "So; th' Narker's gotten it at th' end of o'. By th' Mass! yon lad's a rare un! But th' Narker were a foo' to tak' a job fro' anybody else i' th' stead of doin' for hissel'. Weel, he's done wi' o' now."

The one who had been whining after the fugitive now broke out into hideous curses on the dead man. "The ——!" he screamed. "'Trust me,' cackled the Jack Straw: and I did trust him, and here I am, with a thousand good guineas and a life to enjoy them in both slipped through my fingers like a whistle of the wind. Oh! ——!" he broke off; kicking the corpse ferociously.

In that same instant he went backwards head first into the ditch beside him—the guide had coolly jerked his feet from under him. "Aw'll larn thee; chuz what dal'd foo' thou art. Thee punce (kick)

a livin' mon when tha wants to punce onybody: one 'at con punce back; nōne a dyed (dead) un;" and as he ended the guide rose to his feet and stood ready.

"Curse you! Oh; the curse of forty thousand hells upon you!" whined the voice; between a choked whisper and a devilish whistle. "Oh, how I will shoot you!" trailed out the words as the overturned one scrambled into the roadway again, pistol in hand.

Instantly a crashing kick upon the knee cap dropped him as if it had been a bullet, and hardly had he touched the ground when another kick sent the pistol flying from his mangled fingers. A third kick upon the thigh socket of his other leg completely disabled him and then while he lay, writhing and hissing impotent curses, the guide spoke again, as coolly as before.

"Now then, my fine foo' fro' Lunnon—or chuz wheer ever tha does come fro'—Aw'll show thee what it is to punce a dyed mon, or poo a pistol on a wick (living) un. Tak' that! an' that! How dost ta like it? Heh?"

With each word the terrible wooden soled and iron shod clogs of the speaker thudded home against the writhing body on the ground, till the curses

became groans and the limbs lay inanimate, and then, with one last thundering kick, the guide drew back and surveyed it.

“Th’ Narker were slain doin’ this felly’s work, an’ then he punced his dyed body after o’,” continued he. “But if he punced t’one, he’ll remember tother; me, Ned o’ th’ Cloof; lung after he’s forgotten th’ Narker.

“Poor owd Narker! Weel, lads, fot’ him across an’ let’s bury him out o’ th’ gate. But this tother may lie; dyed or wick—let’s see; what were it th’ Narker said he were co’d?”

“Chapel, or summat o’ that mak,” answered one of the four who, after standing by from the first, were now stooping to lift the body of the Narker.

“Chapel,” repeated Ned o’ th’ Cloof. “By th’ Mass then, Aw reckon nobody but th’ Owd Lad were ever inside that Chapel.”

CHAPTER X

PENGRAIG had hardly started his messenger for Wales before he was invited to join the chief officials at dinner—the meal being then ready. Here he sat next to that Lord Elcho who had set in motion the suggestion as to recruiting, and very shortly the two were deep in the details of the subject. But presently the discussion changed to the rebellion in general, and a remark of Lord Elcho's elicited a quick question.

“Why, of what religion is the Prince then?”

“Well, it's difficult to say. It's true he did attend the Established Kirk when he first came down out of the Highlands; but I fear me his religion is still to seek.” Lord Elcho shook his head as he spoke.

“Come then; that is not such bad news after all,” responded Pengraig promptly. “It makes our case even more hopeful yet.”

“I don't just see how you make that out,” rejoined the other cautiously.

“Well, the lad's grandfather lost his throne be-

cause of his bigoted papistry, and there are thousands of good Protestants now holding back from joining us for fear the Prince is bigoted, too. It is Rome, not Stuart, that the people baulk at. But if the lad has no particular keenness to religion we may be sure he will never attempt to cram the Pope down our throats. Yea, I shall have a new argument now when I begin to try and persuade the people."

"You may be right," returned Elcho caustically. "You know the line, 'the devil himself can quote scripture to his purpose,' but it seems new to quote in a lad's favour that he's of no particular religion."

"There, now you are wresting my words to fit your argument. You know well what I mean. Better a vague religion than the wrong one in this case, provided the lad has 'the fear of God in his heart and a due reverence for the things his people hold most sacred. For then, you see, there is a prospect that he may see no objection to bringing up his future sons as Protestants. Drink, man! drink with me to that, for we'll rouse up recruits from every corner, now that we can tell them they need fear no Pope under the Prince's bonnet."

"I'll drink with you then to that," replied Elcho

with a dubious smile. "Anything that will bring us in recruits is to be welcomed; for I'll not hide from you that it's recruits we're sore in need of."

"Then your need will not be sore much longer. Nay, we'll start a recruiting party this very night for Manchester. A single sergeant and his drummer will be enough, for there isn't a justice in all Christ's Croft* will dare or desire to meddle with the White Cockade in any man's hat to-day."

"Are you so sure, then, that the country is willing to welcome us?"

"I am, and to-morrow you shall have confirmation of it, for there are two more Welsh gentlemen; the Vaughans; who were to leave Wynstay the day after I did. They will thus bring news of a later state than mine, but you will see that they will but confirm my words."

"And you think the sergeant will gather any recruits?" said Elcho.

"Recruits! A regiment! Man, I'll warrant you he has a whole regiment ready against the Prince's arrival."

Lord Elcho fairly smiled at last, catching the infection of the cheerful confidence in the other's

* Christ's Croft is that part of Lancashire lying between the Ribble and Mersey; making with the Fylde and Furness the three divisions of the county.

eyes. "Man," quoth he; "I'll hold you to your warranty in that. If the sergeant gets no regiment in Manchester then I'll hold you to pay for the officers' dinner at the best inn of that town. And if I lose I'll pay the same with the lightest heart that ever counted silver down to pay a debt in England."

"I take the wager," retorted the other, laughing: "and in the meantime let us go and see what fortune has attended our recruiting here."

Henceforward this matter of the recruiting was the one passion of Pengraig, and when they arrived in Manchester he was cheerily prompt to claim the wager from Lord Elcho. "Look you! did I not promise you a regiment ready against our arrival? And what do you think of this?"

"I think it is queer that the country gentlemen should bide at home, each at his own hearth, while the townsmen of such a place as this flock to join us," returned Elcho caustically. "Or are we all crazy this journey?"

"Ah, you are thinking of the last rising. Let that lie; that journey wore to its end and is done with. We have to look to this. But the wager is won and I claim the stakes; so while you order the dinner I will go and issue orders for the collection of all the arms in the town."

Later, that same day, the two Vaughans met Pengraig as he issued from his lodgings. "Ah, we were just coming to find you," spoke William. "The Prince commands your presence at once. There is a question of some difficulty as to who should command this Manchester regiment."

"I do not see where the difficulty lies," replied Pengraig instantly. "Some gentleman from its own ranks. There are enough (and gallant gentlemen too) in it to furnish Colonels for a small army."

"But the Prince"—returned William, a twinkle in his eye—"thinks that the best commander would be a certain Welsh gentleman of our acquaintance. Esquire Morgan, as they call him—yourself, to wit."

"Then the Prince, with all due deference, is wrong," retorted Pengraig. "Let that Welsh gentleman wait till he can command a Welsh regiment, and meanwhile let these Lancashire men be commanded by a Lancashire gentleman. Is there not Mr. Towneley? and who should be fitter for the post than a member of the family which has suffered so much in the past for the White Rose? At the same time, gentlemen, I have no wish to influence you, should any command be offered to you. I merely state my own view."

“ Which is that of both my nephew and myself,” rejoined William heartily. “ For myself, I shall remain as one of the Prince’s Life Guards until our Welsh troops appear.”

“ And I,” added the younger Vaughan, with a smile; “ shall stick to my duties under the Duke of Perth.”

“ I commend you both,” said Pengraig gratefully, “ while at the same time I hope that your reward may be speedy. Certainly Sir Watkin should join us in three or four days at farthest. I wonder how Meredith prospered on his journey ?”

But though he, confident in his faith in Ithel, dismissed the wonder at the moment he entered the Prince’s presence to urge—and carry—Towneley’s appointment; yet there was one in another place who could not so lightly put the same wonder from him—Gwgan Maddox, to wit.

Riding into Wrexham from Wynstay, he drew rein and lighted down under the swinging sign of the Swan. In one of the rooms inside he found a figure all swathed and muffled up, leaning uneasily in a chair over the fire; nursing a great tankard of mulled ale.

“ I got your message in Rhiwvabon, and galloped up here immediately,” began Maddox. “ But what

the devil is wrong that you look so surly? Surely you have not failed."

"Failed!" whined the other huskily. "Look at me!" throwing back the great riding coat and showing himself one mass of wrappings beneath.

"What has happened then?" cried Maddox, his face paling with apprehension.

"Has that Meredith got back yet?" demanded the other by way of reply.

"No! But does that mean that he escaped? Speak out you——"

"Then he never will get back," snarled the other showing his teeth like a mongrel. "D——n him! I am glad I fired. I knew I couldn't miss him at that distance. I was so close I could almost feel the back-throw from his body. He's lying in some ditch then, dead and stripped, I'll warrant. Curse him!"

"How came you to botch the job so? Stop your snarling and tell me that, you miserable scarecrow!" broke out Maddox.

"Scarecrow!" repeated the other in a blood curdling whine. Just for a moment he seemed as if he would leap upon Maddox and murder him outright. Then a horrible smile flitted across his battered features, fascinating the other with the

dreadful maliciousness of it. "He! he! a scarecrow!" he whistled, and slowly extending his left hand he took the paralyzed Maddox by the throat, choking back the call for help, while he shook him till his heels clicked together.

"A scarecrow; hee! hee! What a pretty little master it is for a poor man to have," he went on, as with a final jerk he flung his victim into the corner. "Now, sir," continued he, "get up and listen till I tell you a nice little fairy tale. You'll like it ever so much I know, because it's all about how I got kicked nearly to death—yes, you'll like that, I know. Get up!"

Sick in body and soul from fear, both of this man and what he was about to tell, Maddox gathered himself to his feet and crawled to a chair.

"Yes, sit down, Mr. Maddox," repeated Chapel; "you needn't fear any more of my little playfulness. You see we're essential to each other now, because I—but there; you just take a drink of this good mulled ale and then listen."

Utterly demoralized, Maddox took the proffered tankard and drank, handing it back as the other commenced his story. "It was all through those infernal soldiers breaking down the bridges over the Mersey," began Chapel. "I got a highwayman

they called the Narker to take the job in hand, and he set a fellow to wait at the bridge end in Warrington and pretend to be the bridge keeper. We knew there was a patrol of soldiers who would fire from this side at anyone who showed, and so this bridge keeper was left as guide to decoy Meredith to a ferry down the river. The Narker waited in the shadow till the bargain was struck and then rode down and crossed before them, to gather his men ready.

“ But the ferryman fooled us by bringing Meredith across without waiting for our signal, and so before we could get up to the landing to stop him our man clapped spurs to his horse, shot down the Narker, and got away. I got in a shot, however, right through his body just as he went past.

“ Then the Narker’s cutthroats set upon me, because he had been killed, and kicked me senseless; within an inch of my life in fact, and when I came to myself next morning, I found I had been robbed of every penny, except two guineas, sewn into my waistband before I left London.

“ An early carter, passing that way, carried me to an inn some miles away and there I lay; all in a pickle of turpentine, spermaceti, Solomon’s seal and brandy, till this morning. And I’ve only man-

aged to ride now by swearing and beating the horse every stride of the way, in order to ease the pain.

"And now what is the next move, since Meredith is dead?" ended Chapel, with the same old whine as under the cedar at Wynstay.

"You say that Meredith is dead," answered the other, now composed again; "but I tell you that the next move is to find out if he really is dead. You do not seem to understand what a mess we are in. For all we know Meredith may now be snugly recovering in some friendly Jacobite's bed. We cannot afford merely to think he is dead. We must have proof. You shot him and you believe he could not go far. But that is not enough. If you had stripped his corpse and battered his face till no one could recognize it I should feel easier. His being only wounded is worse than his being well, for then we could start afresh. No, the first move is to find him, dead or alive, and then the next move will show itself."

"Then give me three days and thirty guineas, and I'll do it," replied Chapel.

"Well, I can just manage the thirty guineas this once," returned the other; "but remember there must be no failure this time. For——"

"Trust me," broke in Chapel. "Am I likely to

fail with every bone in my body sore to get even with the cause of my hurts? Look at me and remember it's only the longing for revenge that keeps me on my feet at all. Do you think any other man alive could have pulled through such usage? I only wonder at myself being here, instead of dead yonder."

"Oh," ventured Maddox, with a flicker of malicious enjoyment. "You'll get over that and be as bad as ever again. It's a deal better than hanging, you know—there is no getting up and riding away after that."

"Well, I suppose you ought to know," retorted the other. "A man generally sees what is ahead of him on the road he's travelling."

"We're not hung yet, nor likely to be," returned the other sullenly.

"That is exactly what I say, 'nor likely to be,'" repeated Chapel unctuously.

But later, when mounting to return to Wynstay Maddox varied the words. "I'm not hung," muttered he to himself, "but you shall be, Master Chapel, as soon as I've done with you."

CHAPTER XI

By break of day Chapel was in the saddle again, with many a curse and many a contortion, taking the return trail for Fidler's Ferry. But all his foxy movements and crafty enquiries in the neighbourhood of Delamere Forest were fruitless and he came at length to the conclusion that Meredith had never got a mile away from the spot where he was wounded. "No doubt those footpads followed him, as soon as I was senseless," said he to himself. "They would find him lying in the road and after stripping him would perhaps bury the body out of the way. Yes, I had better try what information I can get out of that Ferryman again."

Boldly pursuing this plan he rode to the ferryside and hailed the hut across the water. He had no long time to wait, nor did he lose any in broaching his point when the boat arrived. "You remember me, no doubt," said he, at once.

"Well," sarcastically responded the somewhat startled ferryman, "thou wert na' killed with good looks when I saw thee first, and I'm hanged if

thou'rt much the handsomer for what happened since. But so long as thou carries that snivel with thee, there'll be no mistaking thee. And what dost ta want this time?"

"Only something that you can do yourself without help, and for which, therefore, you can draw all the pay."

"I'm cuttin' nobody's throat to-night, my lad," returned Jone decidedly.

"Nor am I," retorted the other. "All I want is a little bit of information which you can give and no one else the wiser."

"What is it?"

"It's about the fellow we were after the other night—the one who shot the Narker."

"Well?"

"He was shot himself at the same time," pursued Chapel.

"Thou ought to know, since thou did it thyself," returned the ferryman drily, "especially as thou got well pounced after it."

A hideous grin broke out like some strange disease in Chapel's features before he proceeded. "Yes, very well. Now, that young fellow must have dropped out of the saddle before he went very far."

"Well?"

"Well, if you'll show me where that man is lying, dead or alive, I'll give you half as much as the Narker was to have had for the whole of you the other night. You remember what that was, I suppose?"

"Yea, surely. An' dost thou remember how much puncin' thou got from Ned o' th' Cloof that same night? Well, I should get a long sight more than that if I were to tell thee what thou wants."

"What has Ned of the Clough to do with it?" demanded Chapel.

"What wilt thou give to know?" replied the other.

"Five guineas!"

"Keep it then if that's all."

"Look you, Fidler, I'll make it ten if you'll tell me honestly what I want to know."

"Done!" replied the ferryman.

"Well?" interrogated Chapel impatiently.

"Thou's never given me the brass yet," returned the other with exasperating coolness.

With a gasp of hatred, Chapel counted down the ten guineas.

"That's some bit like," quoth the ferryman pocketing the coins.

"Well?" demanded Chapel impatiently.

"Don't be in such a sweat," responded the other slowly.

"Remember that I have these," said Chapel threateningly, lifting the flaps of his waistcoat and showing his pistols.

"Aye, and I remember thou had them t'other night, but thou got punced just the same."

"Yes, but now I am on the look out and neither Ned nor you could do it a second time," retorted Chapel.

"I'm none so sure of that. Shall I try once?" drawled the other.

"Don't be a fool, but tell me what I've paid you to tell."

"Aye, I've taken thy brass and I'll do as I bargained; for I'm game to satisfy thee any way thou likes; either fighting or talking. Well, Ned o' th' Cloof has had that lad taken to a place where he'll be well tended till he gets about again."

"What's that for?" broke out Chapel in astonishment. "Why didn't he finish him where he found him?"

"Thou'd better axe him. I never sper (enquire) aught of him myself. It's naught but a fool's job, is sperin'."

“ But—remember there is money in this for you—are you sure ? ”

“ Happen not, but I’ll just go over and tell Ned thou’rt wanting to know summat from him. He’s yonder in th’ hut, and no doubt gettin’ tired of waiting for me to come back. But wiltna’ come o’er thyself ? Ned’s said a time or two that he’d like gradely well to drop across thee agen. A hundred guineas are none so oft picked out of one mon’s pocket at one go.”

From the first word of this, Chapel had sat still as death in the saddle, for the other had begun by sticking one hand carelessly into the great pocket of his coat, and like magic the wide bell mouth of a short brass blunderbuss had discovered itself underneath the skirt, cocked up at the rider’s body. With a grim chuckle Jone now backed aboard his boat again, saying mockingly as he started it across, “ Canst no’ yer him whistlin’ ? He ne’er whistles but once with his own muzzle: th’ second time he does it with a musket. And thou’d best stond out o’ th’ gate if he begins that.”

At this significant hint Chapel turned and spurred away out of both eye and musket shot of the bank; whining and wagging his head from side to side as he went. Then he drew rein and, looking back

towards the river, let another of his dreadful grins spread over his ghastly visage. "Aha! my little dears!" whined he, with a creepy whisper under all. "I have an idea! Yes, my pretty lambs; such an idea! And I'll see you all hung together in the nice little flock that you are before another three days pass. Oh! my pets! I'll teach you to play tricks with John Chapel!"

With which somewhat peculiar statement the said John Chapel put his horse into motion once more, by the clever expedient of jabbing the spurs viciously again and again into the already bleeding flanks of the poor brute—he being one of those riders who apparently never dream that there is any other means of communication with a horse, except by bit and spur.

It was on this same evening that the army of Prince Charles Edward marched into Macclesfield from Manchester and there, within ten minutes of their arrival, Lord George Murray accosted Pengraig with news of the enemy. "Well, sir," said he brusquely, "I hear that the Duke of Kingston is holding Congleton, a few miles ahead of us, with a strong force and that he covers a great army close behind him commanded by the Duke of Cumberland himself. What say you?"

“That the Duke of Kingston may very well be in Congleton; but that if so, he has only a rabble of gentlemen and perhaps a handful of dragoons under him. But as to Cumberland I do not believe he is anywhere near the place. If you will send a brisk party of our horse against the outpost to-morrow, I’ll warrant you will go through it like a foot through paper and find as little behind.”

Lord George mused for a moment in silence till at length he said slowly: “Perhaps you are right, sir. At any rate there is no other course to take—for many reasons, as you know. Therefore Ker shall take the horse to-morrow—and you, I suppose, will want to go with him in the forefront.”

“Yes, certainly,” responded Pengraig emphatically.

Very early the next morning a strong party of horse moved out of Macclesfield under Ker. The enemy, however, made no attempt to dispute the entrance into Congleton against them, but fell hastily back on the road to Newcastle-under-Lyne; hotly pursued by the exulting Jacobites.

Closer and closer then did the eager spirits under Ker press the retiring foe, until the steady retreat became a disorganized flight, and presently Pengraig caught sight of a village ahead, where the men

of a supporting force of dragoons were rushing wildly about to saddle and mount ere the rout should reach them. Promptly detaching a score or two of the gentlemen nearest to him, he made a sharp circuit to come up in rear of the place and cut off the dragoons before they could join the flight.

As he led away at a sharp trot he turned to where Iolyn rode at his bridle elbow. "Now lad!" cried he; "the time has come at last that you've been looking for. I need not say strike deep."

The lad's face was all alight and moving with excitement, and his eyes seemed to smoke with intensity as he waved the sword in his grip aloft. They were nearing the point; another moment and the trap would be complete, when suddenly Iolyn lifted in his stirrups and cried out. "Faster! Gallop! Gallop! they have seen us! they are flying too!"

No need for a special order; half a dozen voices shouted the charge and every spur went home in wild endeavour to cut off the retreat. But the dragoons were pricking out pell-mell, flying for dear life along the road to the rear, and the headlong rush of the Jacobites struck only the tail of the ruck.

The shock was decisive, a dozen of the dragoons were slain or sore wounded, and twice as many

unhorsed or taken; while those who escaped did but increase the panic of the rest. But amongst the prisoners were two, not dragoons, whose capture was of more importance than all the rest together.

When the charge went home, Iolyn found in front of him two riders in civilian dress, the nearest of whom, turning to make away, was overthrown, horse and man; while the one beyond, firing his holster pistol, broke the lad's sword short off with the ball, and was instantly knocked senseless out of the saddle by a stunning blow from the hilt in return. Leaping to the ground Iolyn drew his bidog and seized the one whom he had first overthrown and who was now struggling to his feet. But before the blow could fall Pengraig leaned over and caught the lad's wrist. "Quarter! give him quarter, Iolyn! Not slay him in cold blood."

"Did they give my mother quarter?" screamed the lad. "They hanged her in cold blood!" yelled he, striving desperately to free his hand.

But others had taken in the scene and now three or four gentlemen leaped down to drag the prisoner from Iolyn's grip. "The spy! the spy!" they shouted. "It is Weir, Cumberland's principal spy!"

Baffled and furious, Iolyn stood for a moment

with blazing eyes and then, as Pengraig loosed his grasp, "The other one!" he cried exultingly, "the one I knocked into the ditch! I'll have a look at that one!"

Pengraig pressed up close upon the lad's heels and looked into the ditch also. Then a pale wave swept over his face and he leaped down just in time to catch the lad's wrist a second time.

For Iolyn, with one hand upon the collar of the reviving man, was brandishing his bidog aloft as he cried over his shoulder, tears of mad exultation in his eyes: "This one I may kill! this is servant to Maddox. This is John Chapel the spy!"

CHAPTER XII

INSTANT help from those nearest enabled Pengraig to save Chapel from sudden death, and a grim speech into Iolyn's ear aided to bring down his fury to demoniac gibberings of unholy rejoicing. "Better than the knife, Iolyn. He shall hang as a spy. Do you hear? He shall hang!"

The prisoners were no sooner secured however, than General Ker commanded immediate resumption of the advance against Newcastle, and Pengraig was particularly requested to take his handful to the front at once. He took Iolyn with him, in order to make sure that no sudden paroxysm of rage should cut off Chapel before confession had been extracted from him; but before he started he hinted to the General the full importance of the one as well as the other captive.

"Then I will send them back to Congleton under guard, for examination and to wait your return," answered Ker at once.

During all the rest of the advance Iolyn rode with his face over his shoulder, looking back towards

the place of capture as if already he could see the gibbet and its black fruit. Now and again Pengraig, riding with stern face beside him, would check the lad's muttering, but for the more part he himself seemed like a man who has been wounded in his nearest point. "If Chapel, then what of Chapel's master?" thought he to himself; "and if Chapel's master, then what of Sir Watkin's rising? We ought to have heard some rumour of it by this time. I must turn that fellow inside out if need be to get at the truth."

So racked was he with apprehension and foreboding of what Chapel's presence with Weir might betoken, that, when at length the word was given to return, he lost no time in excusing himself, and, accompanied by Iolyn, pushed back at a round pace for Congleton. But here, like a blow in the face, the first word was that the prisoner had escaped.

"Escaped!" He towered with grim visage in front of the airy young gentleman who had commanded the escort. "Escaped, sir. And how?"

"Why, sir," returned the other feebly, now standing shamefaced under the wrathful demand: "It was most unmannerly; I do protest. We were half way back here and passing along the edge of a close wood of young pines, so thick that you would

swear a terrier could not scratch through, let alone a horse. And this prisoner fellow—to look at him you would take oath that he had never recovered from the blow that knocked him out of the saddle; nay, so dazed and sick did he seem that I gave orders to loose his wrists so that he could clutch the saddlebow. But he did, sir!” protested the officer with emphasis, as Pengraig broke out with a savage groan at hearing of the first stroke of folly. “What would you, sir? When his feet were still tied and a trooper had hold of his horse by the bridle rein? How was I to expect such a thing, when the wood was at its thickest and he was at his sickest just there?

“For he suddenly lurched so violently against the one holding his rein as to make the man drop that and catch at him to save him from tumbling into the road. And then—none of us knew just how—the fellow was as all alive as a madman. He slapped his horse on both shoulders at once, as loud as a musket, and let out a yell like forty devils together. The horse sprung away like a shot, scared out of his life, and at the second stride the rider had the rein and turned him straight away into a path that nobody but a poacher could have ever noticed. He must have been looking for just such a path.

"Of course we all went after him and then this other Weir fellow made off too; and while I and some of the rest ran this one down again the others couldn't catch the first one; the trees were so thick and he was so quick, besides that the path wound and forked so that most of them ran into bogs.

"In fact, sir," ended the officer, as one with a righteous grievance; "the fellow must have had his plan laid from the very first."

"Ho!" returned Pengraig grimly; "and did you think he was in any other mood? Or perhaps you imagined that his one desire was to come here to be hung, and that he had been placed, not in your charge, but under your care, that you might sustain him with creature comforts on the road?"

"But, sir," protested the officer, now in ag-grieved astonishment, "I never dreamed of his attempting such a thing or I should have watched him closer!"

"No doubt it is a monstrous ingratitude in a man that he should turn his back upon a nice comfortable gallows; especially in these times when one finds it so hard to come by any assured settlement of one's daily affairs. Yea, I protest it is a marvellous aberration of the intellect, and should be held sufficient

to establish such a man as *non compos mentis*. It is staggering; no less."

"Well, sir," retorted the other, more than a little nettled; "I did at least bring in Weir safe enough, and he is the most important of the two."

"Is he?" returned Pengraig, "I pray heaven he may be, and that the escape of that scoundrel Chapel may not mean some fatal miscarriage of the Welsh rising."

During all this explanation Iolyn had been hovering with impatient feet about the two speakers; gibbering with noiseless lips: his eyes aflame with ferocious light, the while he fingered the bidogan at his belt. But now, as Pengraig turned sharply to rebuke him, he lifted his face to the sky and raised a long blood-curdling yell, beating the while with open hand upon his parted lips, breaking the sound into a horrible cacophony that made all save Pengraig fall shuddering back as if from a sudden demon.

The other had opened his lips to check him, but before the words could break through the torrent of appalling sound Iolyn had turned and leaped upon his horse, crying as he dashed away, "I'll find John Chapel! And when I do I'll tie him fast with the edge of my bidogan!"

It would have been useless to have attempted to overtake him, and moreover Pengraig devoutly hoped that he might by some marvellous upcast succeed in overhauling the escaped scoundrel. Therefore he stood and watched him as with relentless knee the lad pushed southward again. Not until he was out of sight of those he left behind did Iolyn draw down to an easier pace for the sake of his horse. "I shall need him before the day is out," muttered he, patting the willing crest as he spoke.

When he came to the wood he kept a wary eye until he detected the path by which the prisoner had escaped, but instead of following it he took good note of its location and then pressed forward again.

"Two or three of those dragoons were badly wounded," said he as he trotted on. "They'll be lying now somewhere in that village; drawing nearer and surer along to death with every gasp that drags through their throats. One of them shall tell me what John Chapel was doing with them—I'll make them tell me."

Reaching the village he found that one of the dying men had been carried into the cottage of a poor widow, beside whose garden fence the skirmish

had happened. Dismounting at the door, "Yea," muttered Iolyn through twitching lips, "I'll make them tell, if I rive their last minutes of life out."

But as he came beside the bed, the sight of the grey lips and drawn and bloody features smote his heart to a sudden flood of pity. "Och!" he cried, "is there nothing I can do to help you? Can I not get you something to ease your pain? Here is brandy in my flask—will you have some warm milk and brandy? Surely that would do you good?"

"Aye, that's it," groaned the wounded man: "brandy will warm me. Something to warm me! My feet are so cold, and my hands, too, and my heart is shivering and freezing under my ribs."

"I have some cream—wouldn't that be better, sir?" put in the poor old widow from the other side of the bed. "And a spoonful of honey to sweeten it, too," she went on, as she moved away to get both; while Iolyn half shouted "Yes" as he stooped on the hearth to rouse the fire.

Snatching down the funnel-shaped copper warming utensil from the cornice above, he thrust its sharp base deep into the blazing faggots as the tender-hearted widow poured the cream into it. Then the honey, clear from a newly broken comb, and in an-

other moment he had added the brandy and poured the whole steaming mixture into a mug, which he was holding to the shaking lips of the dragoon. (There was no doctor there to check them.)

"Aye, that's it," said the stricken man with a deep sigh as the other supported him. "That's all the comfort I can have now. Let me die warm at least since I am to die. I've lain in the cold and the wet; in the snow and the frost so many a year past—let me die warm at last!"

The twitch of the mangled right arm, as the poor fellow involuntarily attempted to wipe his mouth after the drink, brought the tears into Iolyn's eyes, and he wiped the quivering lips as tenderly as a father might wipe the lips of a dying child. "And I came in swearing I'd force you to tell me about that damnable whining spy of a John Chapel!" he broke out in savage self-disgust. "But you'll forgive me that, won't you?" ended he, with a pathetic appeal in his face.

"Ah! but you never would have done it, I know," answered the dragoon, with in his voice the weary smile into which his drawn features could not relax.

"But still he is a spy," protested Iolyn, as if arguing against his better nature.

“ And what should I have been if I had told you ? ” said the other faintly.

“ Drink of this again,” returned Iolyn, proffering the cup—token of his defeat in the argument.

But while the dragoon thanked him with a look, a new path opened. “ Did you say a whining spy, sir ? ” said the widow. “ One with his face all damaged, and riding a dun horse ? And his eyes like dead fishes’ eyes, sir ? I heard him talking to Mr. Weir when he first rode in to the village. ”

“ Did you ? ” said Iolyn eagerly ; “ then tell me every word they said : him with the whine especially. And if you can tell me what I want to know, mother, I’ll send you money enough to keep you all the days of your life. Tell me now. ”

“ La ! sir,” answered she sadly, shaking her head at what she thought was a mere youthful recklessness of speech. “ It would take many a bright guinea to do that, but I’ll thank you kindly and tell you what I can, all the same. The one that whined rode in with a soldier and asked for Mr. Weir, and as soon as they got to talking began to say that he had been sent to capture a rebel officer (for that’s what they call all you gentlemen, sir : rebels ! As if you were not fighting for the right.) This rebel officer was carrying despatches from the

Prince, and the whining spy said that he had wounded him and now wanted a troop of dragoons to go and take him out of a Tory nest he'd got into. Then they got arguing and whining and I couldn't catch the words because they moved their horses, and I didn't dare go closer for fear it should be wrong."

"But surely you heard more than that," begged Iolyn, rising and extending his hands in adjuration towards the woman. "Just think; that rebel officer that was wounded was Ithel; poor Presgwyn—surely you heard Chapel say where the rebel nest was?"

"I'm very sorry, sir, indeed," answered the poor widow, more than a little moved by his distress. "I'm sure I'd have told you and gladly if I could. But I couldn't catch what they said and I didn't hear any name of a place at all."

"And that is just the thing that I wanted to know: the thing for which I would have given everything I had," groaned Iolyn. "But I must after this Chapel—the fools have let him escape again——"

"And I hope you'll catch him, sir," put in the soldier, summoning his fast ebbing strength to speak. "Only for him we'd never have been surprised."

It was our sentry that left his outpost, like a gaping gander of a fool; thinking he'd done wonderful and captured a prisoner. That's what comes of putting recruits to old soldiers' duty. And that's why I'll be dead in another twenty minutes while the recruit and the spy get clean off. Ah well, it's all in the service! what's one old soldier more or less to be moaned over!"

"Here, drink again," said Iolyn quickly, holding the cup once more. "And you're not dead yet by a long shot. Moreover, I promise you that, whatever comes of the recruit, the spy shall not come clean off. No, not John Chapel; nor yet John Chapel's master. I am going now; and when I find them—but here, mother, here you are," he broke off, passing his purse to the widow. "That's all I've got, barring some loose silver, and I know you'll do your best to nurse our poor friend here to strength again."

"Ah, I know," broke in the dying dragoon wearily. "I've been wounded a many's the time before, but this time I'm killed—I know," and he shook his head gently in spite of the pain.

The hasty protestation died on Iolyn's lips and the soldier nodded feebly as he continued. "No, no. I know. Only let her give me brandy like

that to keep me warm till I die. I've lain out in the cold so long, I want to die warm at last. Let me die warm—that's enough for me."

Iolyn turned to the widow again. "Yes, sir," said she earnestly, "everything that I can do and get for him, I will. And there's two others in John Webster's cottage—can I give John Webster something out of the purse too?"

"Whatever you like," answered Iolyn: "and if you run short with the purse then go and ask Pengraig for more; he is the Prince's Counsellor, and he'll give you all you want. Say that I told you so; say Iolyn sent you. He'll do it then. And so goodbye to you both, and"—this to the dragoon—"be sure that I'll settle with the spy that got you hurt."

Once outside again he did not even wait for the stirrup but vaulted into the saddle and started off at a trot. When he reached the place of Chapel's escape he promptly plunged along the path; a mere trail made by animals seeking other grazing grounds, and after something like half a mile of devious turnings emerged into a broad lane. A couple of miles further on and he came to a village where the gossips had not yet finished spluttering forth their excited wonderings at the flight of the man with the blood on his face.

"That was my hilt," said Iolyn, as he sat for an instant longer listening to the flood of words; half a dozen talking at once.

But as he pushed on he kept a keen lookout for the trail of the fugitive's horse.

"There it is," he would mutter from time to time; "three great slab hoofs and one mule shaped. It's as plain as print in the mud."

At the next village he found that Chapel had checked long enough to get someone to cut the bonds which had bound his feet under his horse.

"Then he's free to get down and dart into a thicket if he thinks need of it," commented Iolyn, as he lifted the rein and followed on.

But, scantily a mile further on, he came to a little hamlet at a cross roads, and here he learnt that his man had passed through at a walk. "He thinks there's no pursuit," commented Iolyn again. "That is on my side and so I may presently run him down in some alehouse, drinking his own health to his own escape. Ho! if only I can just drop in on him when the can is at his lips!

"But it's weary on us that Pengraig would not believe me that night at Wynstay, or—yea, that is what I ought to have done, I ought to have bido-gan'd the spy, there in the midst of them all: aye

and Maddox with him; and Maddox's Pencenedl, with all the cursed tribe of them. What! Ten tribes can never undo the harm of one traitor!"

Thus while he muttered, he yet never lost sight of the track he followed. Chapel had apparently headed a course which would fetch him by a wide sweep to Stafford. He evidently believed that the troops holding Newcastle had been driven out and forced to retreat upon their next support, and so was himself falling back upon the same point. The pursuer guessed all this. "Aye, he is going south," said he, "while it is certain that Ithel is lying wounded somewhere west or north of us. But never mind, if only I stick to John Chapel's trail I shall find Presgwyn at last. And meanwhile if I am to overtake him at all it must be quickly, for night will soon shut down on us in a country which he evidently knows very well and I not at all."

In spite, therefore, of the weariness of his horse, he pushed on faster yet, and just as day was glooming down to dark he caught sight of his man.

But it was unexpectedly and at a point a couple of miles earlier than inquiries had led him to expect, so that he flushed him only to lose him. For the horse that had been walking drew away easily, stride over stride, from the one already distressed in

the pursuit, and the hastily snapped pistols sent their bullets ploughing harmlessly into the road, lengths in rear of their object.

The dash was short, hopeless from the first, as Iolyn speedily recognized, and half a mile further on his horse stumbled so persistently and dangerously that he was forced to pull in to a trot, lest the poor leg-weary beast should cross and come down altogether.

Then the night shut down and the fugitive was escaped indeed; leaving his pursuer, with a horse dead lame, in a strange country.

"But it's only for the present, friend Chapel," grinned Iolyn with bare teeth. "I'll get you yet. Yea, I'll get you just as surely in the end."

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN Pengraig had seen the last of Iolyn as the latter disappeared down the road in leaving, he turned and commanded that Weir should be brought before Lord George Murray at once. Leading the way himself he was therefore present when Weir, under threat of present hanging, confessed all he knew as to the numbers and positions of the troops under the Duke of Cumberland. Yet, though he thereby expected to have purchased his life again, it was only by dint of Charles Edward's positive order that he escaped an immediate gibbet; for with that horror of all severity which was, perhaps, a weakness with him, the Prince had, before leaving Macclesfield, delivered his written commands that all captured spies should be reserved, after examination, to be dealt with by himself alone. These orders, now exhibited for the first time to the officers and chiefs by Lord George, sufficed to gain a respite for Weir till he could be brought next night before the Prince at Ashbourne, whose merciful instincts then made excuses for the captured

wretch and so provided a future witness whose testimony was afterwards to be so fatal to more than one of his gallant followers.

Yet, even before the Prince's commands had been shown on his behalf, the spy had stubbornly stuck to it that he knew nothing whatever of Chapel. Rather he professed to believe that the latter had been an emissary of Lord George's own, sent to befool them with some plausible tale whereby to keep them engrossed till the Jacobite advance could surprise them—"as had in fact happened."

"And what was this plausible tale?" demanded Pengraig.

"That the Welsh were rising and that we ought to send troops against them at once;" answered Weir unhesitatingly. Then, as he saw the light flash up into the face of Pengraig, he mentally congratulated himself. "For," thought he, "if I can only get you to halt your precious army here for a few days; waiting for the Welsh, then by that time the Duke will have concentrated his troops against you from the south while Wade will be upon you from the north and then—ah then."

But Lord George's next speech effectually dashed his hope. "Ah, if Cumberland be scattered so, from Coventry to Newcastle, then we need trouble

no more about him. We have only to slip past and continue on to London and he will at once retreat, since he will fancy that we are trying to cut him off in rear till the Welsh can reach him in front. He will think himself far too shrewd to wait till he is caught between two fires."

"But why not make the feint a reality?" urged Pengraig. "Surely it were better to crush him at once, and then the road to London will be more than clear."

"Nay, sir. Pardon me: you do forget. It is a race already betwixt ourselves and Wade, from the other Newcastle—that upon Tyne—and if we stay to join the Welsh; without which it would be folly to fight the overwhelming numbers of the Duke, then Wade will simply slip past and fortify London against us. No: let me quote your own words against you, sir, when first you spoke to the Prince—'Forward is our word and London our object.' Your words are even wiser now than then, for we are so far into England that our only safety lies in ultimate victory—and ultimate victory lies in the possessing London. Therefore the sooner we possess it, the better. Forward then is the word."

"Aye; but, let us make sure before we finally give the word," answered Pengraig. "This is a momen-

tous decision when it is given and it may well be the making or the marring of us——”

There was more of such discussion and many arguments this way and that in the matter. Pro and con they sat together in a long half-hour's debate; but in the end Lord George prevailed and so next day a forced march was made to Ashbourne, where they rejoined the main body under Prince Charles Edward, whose troops had come from Macclesfield by a nearer route.

From Ashbourne the march was to Derby, and as the van left the town Lord Elcho rode alongside Pengraig. “Ah,” said he drily; “I mind you promised us a Welsh army by the time we reached this place. What; man, it is a brave army no doubt; but would you object to opening your pouch and let us have a look at it. How many thousand are there?” ended he quizzically.

For the first instant Pengraig was minded to resent the jest, but the saturnine twinkle in the young lord's eye was irresistible. “Why now,” laughed he in return; “I am afraid to open my pouch, for we all know how keen you Scots are after the silver, and it's likely you'd be wanting to sell me some mouldy old Peel and a patch of hungry heather in return for my good coin; so that you could settle down like

all the rest in Nova Scotia—I mean the London Nova Scotia; not the one over sea.”

“ Well,” returned the other, still smiling; “ an’ if these Welsh of yours don’t join us soon, I’m thinking I should well like to sell you every tower I’ve got; Peel or castle; mouldy or otherwise, and as much of the heather as you’ll take in with the rest. Moreover I’ll not be haggling about the bawbees for it either: just enough to see me over to France and keep me from starvation when I get there. When do you look now to hear of your Welsh ?”

“ At any moment. Certainly this day.”

“ Before we reach Derby ?”

“ Yes. I feel sure of it,” returned Pengraig.

“ Do you feel sure enough to bet on it ?” pursued Lord Elcho.

“ Certainly; the same bet as before. Another dinner to be had in Derby to-night, just as the other was in Manchester.”

“ Well; I feel more comfortable. When a man bets it shows that he has confidence in himself at least. And I’ll not deny to you, Pengraig”—the twinkle died out and left a grave look in the speaker’s face—“ I’ll not deny that we have great need of some such occurrence as the joining of some

new army to our own. It's a thing that has not been properly counted on by our leaders, is this that some of the Highland chiefs are muttering one to another."

"And what are they muttering?" returned Pengraig quickly; alert for any symptom of the disunion which he had been long enough in the Prince's counsels to dread.

"It's just this, there's many a man in this army who joined it more for love of Scotland than for love of the Prince himself. Or, to put it another way, there's many a man joined us because he thought that Scotland's only hope lies in the Prince. You must not forget that it's the Act of Union which sticks in Scotland's gorge. The taking away of our Parliament and separate estate sticks with many a man who would not care a bodle whether George or Jamie wore the crown, so that he wore it in Holyrood. Well, these men think that our business as Scotsmen lies only with Scotland, and that we should have been content to keep Scotland clear of the Hanoverians and the union, call over King James to reign in Holyrood, and let England have whom she likes for king. In fact they want to see Scotland a separate kingdom once more. Nay; never mind your arguments to me; I need none.

But to come to what I was saying—these men then, say that they marched into England out of compassion, to help the English to throw off a foreign yoke. And now they say that they have come so far and find that they were mistaken: the people of England are evidently quite satisfied with the Hanoverian or else why don't they rise?"

"And so they wish to turn back?" queried Pengraig grimly.

"They do."

"And what does the Prince say to it?"

"Nothing as yet, and for the best of all reasons; he has never heard of it. But we'll all hear it now, and that before to-morrow night or I'm much mistaken. Then, too, we'll hear what the Prince thinks of it!"—the twinkle came back into the speaker's eye as he uttered the last sentence.

"Humph! but as long as Lord George Murray keeps right I suppose we are safe enough," returned Pengraig thoughtfully. "The few malcontents can hardly draw off in the midst of England."

"Aye, but are you so sure of Lord George?" pursued Elcho drily. "I tell you, he is the General, it is true, and he is ambitious; which is more: but the feeling I have spoken of is far wider spread than you guess, and I have already noticed the

leaders of it plucking him by the sleeve and whispering with bent brows into his ear. Besides which you must not forget that the Duke of Perth is one of the keenest for this capture of London, and you can guess what that will weigh with Lord George—the same lord who has already put the whole expedition in jeopardy in order to oust His Grace of Perth from the leadership. Nay, nay, it is Murray himself I fear in the next council; for it's in the very next council the thing will crop up; please God that council do not end in fighting among ourselves."

"God grant we escape that at least!" answered the other fervently. "And now it all depends upon our hearing from the Welsh. Ah, if we had only moved that way from Congleton!"

He pondered in silence for a little while until: "But I know that Wales is up:" said he to Elcho warmly: "there was no slackness amongst any of them. I know that the moment Sir Watkin got my message he would give the word: and that message went by a trusty hand. No: no: my faith is strong as ever: we shall hear to-day and—I'll double the bet with you," ended he cheerily.

"Come away; come away; I'll take it with pleasure," responded the other. "It does one good to ride beside a hopeful heart after a spell of these

wrinkled brows and sidelong glances. And we'll have a cup together at the first inn for the relief of it."

The cheeriness thus begotten lasted the two even till they reached Derby; in spite of the fact that no news of the Welsh had yet arrived. "I've lost the bet," said Pengraig as they rode in; "but I'll pay with little sorrow; for I still stick to it that we'll hear news to-day—the day is not done yet by many a long hour. No, no," and turning to a group of citizens in the market place—"You did not expect to see us so early," cried he briskly as he passed.

CHAPTER XIV

PENGRAIG paid his debt at the best inn in the town and while the dinner was in progress he had ample opportunity of noting how dark and heavy seemed the spirits of the company round the board. It did not need the sardonic innuendoes of Lord Elcho, as he sat beside him, to remind him of the danger impending. "And the day wears out towards the midnight," Elcho would repeat as a tag upon every speech.

But over the wine a word came flashing in which broke athwart the gloom of the company as the lightning splits a storm cloud and brings forth its voice in thunder.

"So! the Welsh are not risen at all!"

Pengraig stood instant to his feet; his face as grey as ashes: his hand upon his hilt. "Who says so?" he demanded in a ringing voice.

"Your own man: the one you call Iolyn," answered a chief near the door, and before Pengraig could answer, in upon them stalked none other than the lad himself.

"Did you say this thing?" demanded Pengraig of him sternly.

"Nay, I am no liar," answered Iolyn, glancing round contemptuously: "I said nothing. The only thing that was said at all was when Weir confessed that Chapel had waylaid and wounded Presgwyn before he reached Wynstay."

"Is not that the same thing?" retorted another of the company. "Sir Watkin was to wait for the letters Presgwyn carried. If Presgwyn were wounded then the letters did not arrive and so——"

"And so you jump to an ill conclusion,—like a woman. And like a nagging woman if you've preached misfortune, then you'd sooner be hung than misfortune should miss. What! has this army stolen down back streets or sneaked by hedge and bridle-path to avoid being seen? The noise of its march has reached Wynstay before this, I'll uphold. Besides, you have not stopped to hear the full of what Weir said," ended Iolyn.

"Then let us have the tale," said Pengraig at once.

Without further pressing the lad told the story of his interview with the dying dragoon and the inn-keeper, as also his own bootless chase after Chapel. "After I missed him that first night," continued

he; "I got a fresh horse and followed next day till I was certain that he had reached Stafford safely. Then I thought that the only way left to me was to come back and find this Weir, and make him repeat every word that Chapel had said. I have just come from listening to his confession and some of these people must have heard and carried the tale—and twisted it as they came, to boot."

"And his confession?" demanded Pengraig.

"Just the same as the innkeeper's; no more, no less, saving that John Chapel was sent by his master, Gwgan Maddox," and here Iolyn looked the other square into the eyes.

Pengraig understood the look. "Yea, you were right, Iolyn; but, God is my witness, I thought I was doing right when I refused to listen to you that night in the hall of Wynstay."

"I knew you thought you were right; you need no witness to that. If I had dreamed it had been otherwise then I would have put the bidogan through the pair of them: master and man together, and taken the consequence, let his Pencenedl cry what cry he would."

"And now——?"

"And now, having chased the man and missed him for the present, I am going to hunt the master.

Him I shall find with Wynstay, I hope, and wherever I find him there I will leave him, if it were under the skirt of the King's own coat—and I care not which King of the two it be"—for the Prince had just wrested Weir from his clutches.

"But you will give Wynstay himself all information as to the Prince and his army," commanded Pengraig.

"I will sir," replied Iolyn. "And now if you will assist me to another horse I will meanwhile dine in some sort, for I have had little food since I left Congleton."

It took several hours before a horse could be purchased, though both Pengraig and Lord Elcho persistently followed every rumour which even remotely promised one for sale. "You see," quoth Elcho drily, "no man likes to part with his horse to-night; for it seems to be in the air that he may want it to-morrow, and silver in the pouch is but a poor substitute for the iron on four hoofs when a man is travelling in a hurry for the benefit of his health."

But a fair seeming beast was found at last, and after a few final instructions Iolyn splashed away into the night for Ashbourne, heading so far north before striking west in order to avoid any chance of falling in with Cumberland's patrols.

When the last sound of him was lost, Lord Elcho turned to Pengraig. "I think yon lad will win through. He's an awkward customer to meet alone, for all his elegant figure and his handsome face. Dod! man! he was keen to put that bidog of his through the ribs of any chief or lord about the board with us, when he stepped in on the heel of the dinner. And you've heard of the difficulty the Prince himself had to get Weir safe out from under his hand! Well, this is nine of the clock of a black night and he'll lose little time in getting his hand on the throttle of this Maddox—but, if Wynstay and his forces come on wings, they would still come too late; of that I'm wearily sure."

"Why?" demanded Pengraig startled at the tone of despondent conviction with which the other ended.

"I fear me that Lord George has cast in his lot with them that draw back, and you know there is a council called—at his suggestion—for the morning of to-morrow."

"Then I must make some move at once to countervail him," returned Pengraig promptly. "He put the Duke of Perth out of the command did he not?"

"You have most surely hit the only hope we have," replied the other. "This would be a good

point for Perth to renew the tug between them. If he won it would leave Murray in command while at the same time over-ruling him."

"Yes, but does it not at the same time make a personal matter of it, and thus provoke the rest to take sides as before—But it is the only course we can shape now, so we must even take the risk," said Pengraig.

"And I see you have also gauged exactly the little value there is in our only hope," pursued Elcho grimly.

"That may all be; but, little or much, we must do the best we can." With which last dictum the two wended back to their lodgings.

At the council next day it was evident from the first that Lord George had fully come to a decision and was prepared to push his point to the farthest. He was not one of those who thought that Scotland might again be set up as a separate kingdom under the Stuarts, and that England should be left to fight out its own salvation. He well understood that there can be only one crown and one king in Britain; but he hoped by drawing the King's armies after him into Scotland to leave England empty of troops and open to the landing of that army which France had so often promised to send to the assistance of

the Stuart cause. Again he was far too able a general not to give full weight to all the dangers of their present position, while at the same time he was not sufficiently romantic to give full weight to all its advantages. Only a Montrose could have perfectly filled the post of general to the Jacobite army that day, and it is no discredit to Lord George to say that he was not a Montrose.

And yet he might well have paused as he looked at the radiant face of the gallant and debonair young Prince—for of all the men about him that morning Charles Edward was probably the only one who came to that council absolutely unsuspecting of what was about to follow. Thus he was as one lost in amazement when Lord George opened the point that was in his mind.

Speaking with a firm, grave tone the latter represented that the Scots had marched into England, depending either upon a landing of the French to their aid, or a general uprising of the English; neither of which had occurred. Their present small army was totally inadequate to face the three which "the Elector" had in the field against them. Even should they succeed in gaining a victory over one of these three armies, still their own unavoidable losses thereby would undo them, and it was far better

that they should go back and join their friends in Scotland and live and die with them.

The amazement of the Prince had given way to anger before these words were half finished, and he listened to the later arguments with a fiery heat of impatience which broke into white wrath as lord after lord and chief after chief agreed with what had been said—as they had decided to do before ever the council met.

“Then, gentlemen!” cried Charles Edward passionately: “I see you are all minded to betray me. But rather than go back I would wish to be twenty feet under ground!”

Till now the Duke of Perth had not spoken, but at this indignant outburst he opened on the line Pengraig had prompted. He saw at once that there was no hope of bringing the malcontents to a resumption of the advance upon London and so he put the middle course.

“If I might suggest it to your Royal Highness,” said he, bowing; “and to you, gentlemen, there is another plan yet remaining. I think it were well if we should march to Wales and join Sir Watkin Wyn and the Duke of Beaufort. We should have men enough then to meet any army, besides having our rear secure.”

“ And I, too, think the same,” joined Sir William Gordon heartily. “ Besides, it were a rank betrayal now to retreat and leave the Welsh alone in the lurch for the Elector to glut his vengeance upon.”

Lord George was adamant. “ We have done all we could. There is nothing now but to retreat,” replied he darkly.

A savage wonder filled Pengraig as he listened to that last word. A chill devil of determination took him and he cut scornfully in upon the speaker. “ Retreat! away with the word or away with the cause! Retreat is ruin! So far you have succeeded by the very audacity of your doings. Men stand astonished at the resolute conduct of this march, and rumour helps you by exaggeration till London counts you for forty thousand instead of four. Once turn; once halt; once seem irresolute and undecided, and rumour will magnify that, too, just as swiftly and as grossly. From demigods and heroes you fall at one fell swoop to riff-raff and broken men; ruined lords; prison 'scaping spendthrifts: a mere rabble of ragged thieves and beggarmen. On your forward march armies broke and fled at the sight of you, but once you go back, once you retreat, the very parish beadles will turn out, and each poor pompous knave, secure in gold-laced band and wand of petty

office, will come to hale you off to prison as mere tattered footpads and starveling peace-breakers. Will you from what you are, the terror of the usurper, the admiration of the world, the hope of all leal men, become,—what you will most assuredly become if you retreat,—the derision of Hanover; the scorn of the mob; the victims of block and gallows; of outlaw hunt and merciless attainder?"

He paused and looked round, his whole soul flaming from his eyes in proud challenge, but no man answered him till the Prince spoke.

"Yea, gentlemen! listen to our counsellor; every word he speaks is true. Bethink you of the savage butchery which followed the '15, and turn from a project which would bring a double measure of such horrors upon us all!"

Just for one instant the atmosphere was slack with irresolute emotion. Each waited for his neighbour to speak. Then, softly through the fateful silence, but all too fatally loud, the Duke of Perth, raising his hand in nervous tension, struck the chased hilt of his sword.

Lord George started; their eyes met; ambition roused in him again and he deemed that he read triumph in his rival's look. The moment was over; the charm was broken and the chance was gone.

He straightened up and his voice came hard and cold as he spoke again.

"It is because we do bethink us of the '15 and its cruel consequences that we decide. We believe that we shall best prevent any repetition of that time by marching now to secure Scotland for your Royal Highness."

"You cannot! it is impossible," returned Charles Edward. "Britain is not wide enough for two kings. One must be lord of all: one crown must bind its countries in its one circle."

"But we cannot win England too," persisted Lord George.

"Then you cannot secure Scotland either," returned Pengraig. "Scotland is lost or won in England and England in London. More, how can you reach Scotland again, save as the flying remnant of a defeated army? Wade on one side of you; Cumberland on the other; and your retreat fetching out every man of the militia to oppose you with new courage, born of your own fears. You would be surrounded by overwhelming hosts, and while on your advance you could have swept such numbers to the winds, yet retreat would then have sapped the courage of you all and you would be like sheep in the shambles to the Hanoverian knife."

"The counsellor is right again," took up the Prince. "How can we hope to retreat, with Wade on one flank and Cumberland on the other?"

"But I am ready to warrant you against them both," persisted Lord George. "I will command the rear guard myself and bring you safe to Scotland once more. And if I fail in making good my words, why, you have my head; take it."

"I cannot retreat! I will not retreat," reiterated the Prince.

"No," assented the Duke of Perth. "Let us rather, as I say, march straight into Wales and treble our numbers thrice in as many days."

"Moreover," put in Sir William Gordon, "that country will just suit our Highlanders, being all mountains and wastes like their own, and we should be at home there, with all England before us to harry as the Welsh did in the old days."

"And not alone to harry England," took up Pengraig, "but to march to another Bosworth. For the Welsh would not let you tarry there, but in their thousands would clamour to be led to London. Sir," cried the speaker, turning to the Prince; "if you but go to Wales, then you shall straightway resume your advance upon your capital with all the manhood of that country at your back."

“ And all the English will rise to join me then, as well,” added Charles Edward.

“ It is very strange,” answered Lord George coldly: “ if there be so many to rise for your Royal Highness—I say it is very odd that they should never have sent you money, intelligence or the least advice what to do. If your Royal Highness can produce a single letter from any person of note inviting us forward then we will march at once. But at present we have had no sign from any such an one and not one gentleman has joined us.”

This last loose sentence touched more than one of those present to the quick. Towneley lifted a foot to move, but Pengraig was quicker as he strode across till he stood in front of Murray, his face dark with fury, his voice vibrating with passion. “ You speak of gentlemen. By one stream I draw my blood from the Conqueror’s own kin and by another, through Ivor Hael, I draw from a source that was ancient before ever the Bastard was born. Do you draw yours yet more remotely that you so lightly me? Answer! with your blade if you like!”

But the Duke of Perth on the one side and the Lochiel on the other stood swiftly between them to prevent the quarrel. “ It was not your own descent

or standing which Lord George spoke of," urged Lochiel to Pengraig. "He knows as much as any of us, also, how much you have helped us. What he meant was that no other gentleman had followed your example."

"Of course I did: I do not see what other meaning could attach to my words," followed Lord George angrily, his hand upon his hilt.

But none of the council could afford to allow duelling amongst its members and one and all cried out against the madness of the moment.

In the attempt to settle the disturbance, therefore, they were so earnest that the point at issue was forgotten, and the Prince seized the opportunity of dismissing the council till another day, hoping that meanwhile the fatal proposition to retreat might be abandoned.

Thus it came about that when Pengraig had so far cooled as to bethink him of once more patiently explaining, to the full council, the situation of Wales with regard to themselves, it was too late. The council was dissolved and the members already beginning to depart, most of them with preoccupied looks and full of gloomy forebodings.

"But I scotched the project of retreat for this council, at any rate," said Pengraig to Lord Elcho

as they passed into the street. "Moreover I hope to get word of Wynstay before the next meeting is called, and whether I do or not I'll stand out against this suicidal retreat, if I have to challenge the whole council collectively."

When the two parted, Lord Elcho looked after the other as he went, "Aye, aye," quoth he to himself. "This retreat is suicide and I've no doubt but you would challenge the whole council. But I doubt you'll be present at the next that's called. You are over warm for my Lord George Murray and I'm thinking he'll see to your being absent. There's a council within our council—as I'm afraid we'll all of us find out ere long. But in the meantime there's a drop of rare wine at the inn where I quarter and the bill will be paid like the rest—with the word to return to-morrow."

CHAPTER XV

WHEN Iolyn left Derby it was too late for him to get further than Ashbourne that night. Accordingly, though he started with the first streak of next day's dawn, yet the distance was so great; the elongated ditches, mistermmed roads, so bad; the misdirections so many and the winter daylight so short, that one horse lasted him little more than twenty miles.

"And I am not more than a third of the way along," said he to himself, as the horse sagged slower at every stride. "A done up horse; the day half gone, and all broad Britain hanging on my speed—though that will be little comfort to the first man I meet when I stick a pistol in his ear till we swap horses.

"Talk of the Devil and he's sure to appear," he went on, as a mounted figure came round the bend in front. "Here comes my man; a Whig I'll warrant by the lean look of him; but better mounted than any scurvy Whig of them all should be."

Whig or Tory, the traveller was equally furious at the forced exchange of steeds, but the gleam of

the uncanny eyes that looked along the levelled pistol cowed him even more than the weapon itself, and his report to the nearest Justice was that he had been robbed by a madman.

At forty miles a horse tethered to the gate of a house of good appearance furnished the next exchange. "They must put it down to the war," said Iolyn grimly as he pricked away.

Finally, and after dark, Bryn-y-pys remounted him with the second best horse in the stable, and the last short stretch to Wynstay was at a round trot.

"Never a finger have they moved; never a length have they spurred," quoth the lad to himself savagely as he crossed the Dee; all the long brooding of the road breaking into words now that he had found for certain that Wynstay still waited.

"And we at Derby thought that all the world knew all that we were doing, while here at Erbistoc the folk are but this evening full of the news that we had just reached Manchester and would be marching on to Macclesfield before many days were over—the same Macclesfield we left four days ago. And such is news without a special messenger. But all the better for that in one way, since Maddox will suspect nothing till it is too late for him to slip me."

Then as the thought of Maddox came up again, the hot blood surged in fury through his veins and he forgot the weakness in his body, numb and aching though he was from days of endurance. As the lust for vengeance on the traitor rose higher in his heart he peered forth out of half-closed lids, with a face all smiles, as though he feared that even in the dark some one might otherwise detect the maniac glare of the one, or the convulsive working of the other.

Higher and higher, furlong by furlong, roused the passion in his soul, till as he entered the park of Wynstay his horse was at the gallop and he flew through the shadows like some weird nightmare rider. He left the reins to hang upon the withers as he leaped down and pushed in past the porter at the door, with a short word of "News from the Prince!"

In the great hall the cloth was drawn and the wine was free on the board as he stalked within. Caked with mud from head to foot; swordless and all disordered, he halted under the lights where he could scan the sitters. Black fury blazed from his eyes and twitched his lips as he cast about, seeking! the form of Maddox.

But Maddox had just left the hall and from his

chamber window had happened to see the lad dismount, in the light of the torch by which the under porter had examined the newcomer. A sudden dread had seized him and he had stolen fascinated down, till he stood just outside the open door of the hall in time to hear the words that rang out and made him sick with terror. "Lord of Wynstay! lord that sits birling the wine while his prince marches unhelped to battle! Where is the traitor Maddox?"

At the first fierce word Sir Watkin started up in anger, but when he heard the "traitor" he checked both himself and those who would have started forward to seize the intruder. "How do you know that he is a traitor?" demanded he.

"I captured his servant at Congleton; the servant whom he sent to waylay and murder Presgwyn that word might never come to raise Wynstay till too late for aught but the block."

The flush of anger on the chief's face darkened to cold wrath as he spoke again. "So, gentlemen. Now we know why we have been so long without the word we waited for. There was a traitor with us. Seize him then! Up all and hunt him! His wretched carcass shall at least make all possible atonement!"

The command came too late. No sooner had Maddox heard of the capture of Chapel than he slipped out past the unsuspecting porter to where Iolyn's horse was just recovering his wind. All in one instant he seized the bridle, leaped to the saddle, reined round, and was gone; swallowed up in the shadows of the most densely wooded park in Britain, and thus pursuit was hopeless from the first.

But while the grooms and gentlemen were mounting to follow, Iolyn in his rage had started forth afoot, plunging through bush and brake like one possessed. "He has fled to Coed Cynan," he panted as he went: "gone to claim sanctuary with his Pencenedl. But I will get him if all his tribe were mustered in between."

Presently he heard the crash of twigs and branches, with the thud of chasing hoofs, and in another moment one of the pursuers had mistaken him for Maddox and was charging down upon him, pistol in hand, with a peremptory "Stand!"

There was no time for explanations; he had scarcely room to slip behind a tree as the pistol flashed fire and the ball went whistling through the thicket; but while the rider pulled up to change his course Iolyn darted out upon him. Seizing him by

the foot he dexterously unhorsed him, and almost before the man struck the sword had succeeded him in the saddle and was gone, without troubling about the second pistol shot which the dismounted man discharged after him from where he lay.

The rest of the pursuers, in various parts of the park, soon recognized the hopelessness of the chase and drew rein to return to the hall, yet Iolyn, possessed as he was by a demon of hate, still persisted in his notion of reaching Coed Cynan by the open road, convinced that his man had fled thither. But if the roads of England had been bad in the daylight, the bridle paths of Wales were almost impassable in the darkness, so that it was long after day-break when he finally came in sight of the hall of the Head of Maddox's kindred. Here, checking, he was soon cunningly in conversation with one of the men of the house, from whom he learnt to his fiery chagrin that Maddox had not only not arrived, but that he was not likely ever to do so.

"For why?" demanded the lad instantly.

"Because when the company dispersed from Wynstay, each chief and gentleman to his own house to make ready, Coed Cynan pressed his London kinsman to ride here with him," answered the man. "But that fop hum'd and haw'd and made

excuse till the chief named him smartly with a round oath and so left him in high anger; for he had neither word nor sword to answer the insult with."

Iolyn knew the man for one of those who had been at Wynstay on the night of the declaration and therefore felt no doubt as to the truth of what he heard. There was nothing for it, then, but to return at once and see if the trail could be picked up from some point in Wynstay Park; for the points of egress from it were naturally so few that this could probably be done. With a tired "Good-day then" he turned rein upon his own tracks; his baffled eagerness burning sullenly in his eyes as he pushed away again. Jogging along, it came upon him like a flash that he had spurred away from Wynstay without delivering the message and news which Pengraig had charged him with. "Yea, yea," said he to himself with a grin of bitter self-satire: "I am a rare one to be trusted with a matter of weight. I think that I must really be getting as mad as Maddox taunts me with being. What a senseless fool I was not to have halted long enough to tell Sir Watkin what he needed to know. But no; in my blundering rage I must needs go corpse-candling off by *wern* and *waen** as if Coed Cynan

* = by marsh and moor.

Hall could have mounted and fled too. Aye, this pretty Gwgan seems to win at every turn; one messenger he murders and another he draws off with rage, and both ways keeps the country from rising. Nevertheless, nevertheless—" here the mutterer drew out the bidogan into the wintry sun, gazing upon it fondly while he softly made slow stabs through the empty air.

Riding a jaded horse, it was nightfall ere he once more dismounted at Wynstay and again entered the hall. Every eye was turned on him at once, but he looked only at Sir Watkin, who sat returning the survey with stern look and manner.

"Well?" demanded the chief austere-ly at length.

"I am come—" began Iolyn. Then suddenly he broke off. "I am like the wilful hound that breaks away from the pack on a trail of his own stubborn choosing. And I am come crawling back like the same hound to his kennel, expecting the huntsman's rating. I am the rare messenger Pengraig trusted to bring you the word that was to start your rising; instead of which I must needs go hunting Maddox."

At the repentant simile, so apt in the ear of a Master of Foxhounds, Sir Watkin softened instantly. "Nay lad; excuses cannot mend it. Let it lie, and tell us now what was the news you

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brought. First, however, let me tell you that, when the night passed and you did not return we were forced to guess at what should be done. This morning, therefore, Lord Barrymore and myself sent a letter to the Prince, by the hand of Dr. Barry. But as we knew nothing of the whereabouts of His Royal Highness, we caught at your reference to Congleton, and our messenger goes there first. Now let us hear you."

Briefly and coherently Iolyn ran over the history of the march from Preston till he came to the capture and escape of Chapel, and as he gave the innkeeper's story the faces darkened round the board; hands closed on hilts and teeth were clenched in grim desire for vengeance. Then as the tale of the chase unfolded, exclamations of fierce disappointment broke like a chorus from the listeners as the lad told how all unawares he had flushed the spy only to lose him. So, too, when he told of Weir's corroboration at Derby, Sir Watkin was fain to speak.

"I quite understand now, how you came to follow so far after Maddox last night. Gad! how I should like to hang him!"

But when the tale went on to tell of the fears of Pengraig that the coming council would decide upon

retreat, the Chief sprang to his feet with a great oath.

"Never," cried he: "no retreat! Thank God we sent Barry this morning. That will stop their retreating for the moment till I can reach them with a force that will carry them on.

"And now we must move at once. You know each one his part. Ride now and ride readily!" he cried to his kinsmen round the board.

The command was like a torch to powder and within ten minutes the park was eerie once again with ghostly riders, pricking, some for the meads by sinuous Severn; some for the upper reaches of the Dee. Others headed for the open swells of Ial;* for the sylvan sweeps of Clwyd and the wilder beauties of the Conwy; speeding on, and speeding ever, till the greyest cape of lonely Lleyrn and the farthest field of sad pastured Tal y bolion heard the grim summons to war. From Mon to Maelor the cry was "Rise for the White Rose of Arno," for Shackerly of Gwersyllt was spurring to rouse the gallant gentlemen of the Cycle and bid them out and go.

"Tell every man of the Cycle," cried Sir Watkin

* Ial, in English written Yale. Elihu Yale was of the family of the chiefs of this country.

as he stood at Shackerly's stirrup ere the spurs went home at parting—"tell every man of them not to come here to the general muster, but to mount with the first streak of day and push at top speed for Derby. I want them to be for an earnest of what is to follow when all Wales is risen."

Then, when the last hoof stroke had died into the sough of the night wind in the park, the lord of Wynstay turned and went within again to question and requestion Iolyn, and get from him every detail of the Prince's forces and surroundings.

"Aye! lad!" said he at the finish, "the Prince shall see all his desire again, when once our armies foregather."

CHAPTER XVI

BUT though at Wynstay such high hopes were dominant, Pengraig himself was drinking deep of more than the bitterness of death. After the first council broke up in such disorder he had ridden away westward, in hope of lighting upon some news or rumour telling of forces from Wales marching to join the Prince, and his pathetic eagerness had carried him so far that he did not get back to Derby till all the rest of the army was wrapped in sleep. Thus he learnt nothing of that second and more secret council whose decision was so pregnant with the fate of the nation.

For while Sir Watkin sat, dreaming dreams of splendid triumph, there had already been enacted the first sad scene of one of the saddest tragedies in history: a scene which few men can read or think of without a pang of regret for the pitiful failure of what had seemed heroic endeavour. On that morning, the morning of the fatal Friday, being the sixth day of December 1745, the troops of Charles Edward's army, mustering with high hope of near

battle against the Duke of Cumberland, were countermarched and led about on the first step of that retreat the end of which was fire and sword; ruthless extermination, foul massacre of wounded men; exile and starvation. Yea, sadder yet and even worst of all, there was to be ultimate and hopeless wreck, despised and unhonoured death for him who yesterday was the idol of a million hearts, the inspirer of a thousand songs: "The dear White Rose of Arno," "Bonnie Prince Charlie."

Pengraig mounted in the grey of dawn, with a heart which, while still hot to avenge what he considered the insult of yesterday, was yet full of strong comfort in the idea that the quarrel betwixt himself and Lord George had at least put a decided end to all thoughts of retreat for the present. Like the common soldiers and all the less important commanders, he understood that the day's march was to end with a battle, and so took his accustomed place beside the Prince in happy ignorance, until, as the party halted to let the Camerons pass, it dawned upon him in the broadening light that they were moving in retreat.

For a moment he sat as if turned to stone, all the colour fading from his face as it fades from the face of the dead, till even his lips seemed livid and

his eyes sunk in his head. He turned to the Prince beside him with a world of dumb appealing in figure and in face, as if imploring him to dispel the awful impression which chilled his soul.

Charles had been gloomy and sullen from first putting his foot into the stirrup, and now, as he saw the cruel knowledge eat into the heart of his "counsellor," he made a savage gesture of impotent wrath before he broke into a scornful half laugh. "You see—" his voice broke for a moment and his eye moistened ere he could frame the words coming next—"you see that they have carried their point."

Pengraig's answer came forth huskily and with dry catches as he spoke. "And—you—are going back!"

"Yea, we are afraid," returned Charles Edward in bitter jest as he put his horse into motion again.

The other said no more, but he kept his place immovable while the rest passed on, sitting as still in the saddle as if the hand of Death had already motioned him to tarry. The Prince and his staff moved out of sight, but still Pengraig did not stir till the clash of the Duke of Perth's regiment roused him in passing.

Then slowly rousing, like one recovering from a trance, he looked up. The sight of that body of

gallant men, marching in obedience to such an order, stung him to the quick. Next he caught the figure of young Richard Vaughan, hope and heir of Courtfield, riding listlessly by, and a wave of impotent fury surged through all his veins as he thought of the ruin to come.

Putting spurs to his horse he dashed across. "Vaughan!" he cried with a bitter curse: "they are going back to Scotland!"

But Vaughan had known from yesterday, and his own anger was by this time exhausted. "Yes," replied he with a patient smile; "but wherever they go I am determined, now that I have joined them, to go with them to the end."

Savage and sharp came the other's answer, "I had rather be hanged in Wales than starved in Scotland."

Just then, with his saturnine smile, Lord Elcho rode past. "And is that the best word you have for this fine new jaunt of ours?" said he, darkly sarcastic. "Why, man, the very Whigs in Scotland had no such bitter word for us when first the old jaunt was new; the jaunt that ended at the council yestere'en."

Pengraig looked at him with a softening eye, for he heard the undertone of fierce pain in the voice.

"We little thought of this, Elcho, when first we foregathered over the recruiting at Preston."

The other choked for an instant. "Aye, it's a bitter day to-day." Then with an effort, "Well! let's hope it may end on the heather and not on an oaken block."

"I wish it may for you," said Pengraig gently. "Pray heaven it may for you; but, for me, I was foretold at starting—my own wife saw it, saw it all; gallows and faggot and quartering knife. I tried to shake it from her mind then, but now—God's will be done!"

The last words came as sad as such a prayer could come from a heart as hot as his.

Lord Elcho stretched his hand out in a sudden impulse to grasp that of the other. "Nay, counsellor; are you fey indeed?" said he.

Vaughan, too, sat upright. "Is it so in truth, Pengraig?" spoke he. "You never told us that."

"Why should I?" answered Pengraig with a smile that lit his face like autumn sunset. "Why should I say anything which might have cast you down?"

No more words were said; the three put their steeds into motion again, and side by side, mile after mile, they rode along in silence: even the

angry speeches of the common soldiers, who in the mortification of what they considered this betrayal of their hopes muttered angrily through the whole day's march, failed to provoke a single comment from either of them. Only when at length they topped the rise whence the last glimpse of Derby could be had, the high serenity of Pengraig broke down for an instant as he burst forth in despairing anguish: "Woe for us! we that are defeated not on the field but in the council chamber. The White Rose is broken forever! Far, far worse than the quartering knife is such an hour as this! Yea, the gallows will but be a contemptuous mockery hereafter, for we taste ten thousand times its agony in this, the death of a Cause!"

The little army halted at Ashbourne that night; every man sullen and distrustful of his neighbour, for the rank and file saw plainly that the retreat was as bitter to the Prince as to themselves. Pengraig, brooding upon a watchful pallet over some means of arresting the fatal movement, rose at last in the small hours of the morning and sought the sleeping place of Charles Edward. The sentry on the chamber door did not hesitate to admit him, and presently the Prince was sitting up listening to the scheme the other was unfolding.

“ If I go now to Wynstay and can manage to send a body of three hundred horse, mostly gentlemen, to overtake you at Manchester, as a token of the rest being ready in Wales; then will your Royal Highness undertake to countermand this retreat and march into Wales instead ? ”

“ I cannot countermand it with my own word,” answered Charles Edward sadly. “ If I could, then I should have done so at Derby. But if such an accession of strength does come to me at Manchester, I can at least insist upon remaining there till Wales is all mustered. After that I have no doubt but that my Scots would readily and cheerfully march to join you, or both armies could converge upon that of the usurper.”

“ In that case, sir, I will start at once. And may God prosper your Royal Highness.”

Here he broke off, kissed the Prince’s hand, and was hurriedly gone.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN Gwgan Maddox dashed away from Wynstay he carried a black load in his breast. Only that same afternoon he had waylaid Mari on her solitary walk across the lawn and along the edge of the wood, and within the first dozen words had succeeded in rousing her to contemptuous scorn of him.

“ I am very sorry for you,” said he to her condolingly. “ It is a pity that Mr. Meredith has failed so in his task. We hear——”

“ What ?” demanded Mari imperiously as he paused upon the word.

“ That the Prince has reached Manchester—so that Meredith should have been with us long ago if he really intended it.”

Mari stopped short and turned on him. Her lips parted and for one moment it seemed as if she were about to overwhelm him with a torrent of indignation. Then she checked herself. “ Ah; but I forgot; it is the brave Mr. Maddox who is so sorry for me. We do not all know Gwgan Maddox,

however, and so I would warn him how he speaks such words aloud here at Wynstay, for there are Merediths within half an hour's ride who might not understand that the gorgeous Gwgan is not worth even the contempt of honest gentlemen."

"Then you refuse me?" demanded he angrily. "Do you mean that you have finally thrown me over for this Meredith fellow?"—he was half choking with cheap wrath.

"Thrown you over," repeated Mari disdainfully. "Then because I was barely civil to you, as being my father's ward, you presume to say that there was something more betwixt us. But, there, good sir, you even do yourself injustice when you speak as though you had ever cared for me. I know you better. You did not even reckon that trying after me as worthy to rank amongst the rest of your Society amours until you found that Mr. Meredith was received into my father's house to study. Then your vanity took huff at the bare possibilities of the situation, and your dress became more wonderful and your manner more ridiculous every day, as you strutted about, cocking your coat-skirt with the sword you never dared draw. No, sir, only your vanity is hurt—and let me advise you to return

to those dear Countesses of whom you were forever vapouring. Let them console you."

Before his passion could compass a reply she had started back across the lawn, as not desiring to hold further converse with such a one. So much beside himself with anger was he, however, that he sprang after her and planted himself to bar her progress.

"Stop, you jade! stop, or ——"

Unperturbed: scornful only, "Out of my way!" she cried. "Or do you wish to have the kennelmen come with their dog whips and teach the modish Mr. Maddox his manners?"

Maddox looked over his shoulder, sobered for a flash by a fear lest some of the gentlemen might be watching the scene from the windows of the hall. She took advantage of the moment to move on and in his new fear he let her continue unmolested. Instead, he plunged into the wood again, and there, biting his nails as he marched feverishly to and fro, pondered and cursed over some impossible means of revenging himself on Mari.

It was this rebuff which had sent him sulking to his chamber that evening, thereby saving his wretched life from Iolyn.

Now however, as he rode into England, his brain had got a new shock to combat, in the capture of

his servant Chapel. Mari's last words had finally shattered his favourite scheme of security; which had been to marry her before his forgeries had come to light; and next the capture of Chapel seemed to have destroyed his alternative scheme of skilful murder and subsequent betrayal of the Jacobites. He did not know as yet that Chapel had escaped, nor did he know that the Jacobites had already betrayed themselves, in the council ended no longer ago than the evening of this very day.

"Well, I must find out where I stand first," said he to himself as he spattered along in the darkness. "Congleton is where they captured Chapel—I never thought that villain would have allowed himself to be taken alive—and I must get as near to that place as I can so as to find out exactly what happened and how much the cur confessed."

He could not go far this night however and so he stopped at an inn in the first town where he deemed himself beyond the reach of pursuit. Here next morning he purchased jack boots, together with the other essentials of a riding outfit—freely cursing, in the latest and most modish terms, the make, cut, fashion and seller of each separate article as he bought it—before pursuing his journey. By mid-day he learnt that the Jacobite army had marched

away from Congleton on the road to Derby and in the evening he pushed cautiously into the former town, there to stay over night to pursue enquiries.

But Congleton remembered more than any spy could have confessed in a week, and Weir had been multiplied into many spies, so that Maddox felt his hopes sink lower every moment as he listened to a throng of tales, all told at once, each giving a more wildly improbable narrative than the other—as it seemed to him, catching a bit of this tale or that in a dazed attempt to follow all.

There was no part of any one of them which he could possibly assign to Chapel—or indeed to any sane human being—but the whole pointed to a confession of some sort, and the fear of what that confession had been kept him awake through the greater part of the night, in spite of the utter weariness of his body. So, too, it forced him early into the saddle next morning, for now he had no advantage to gain by delaying in seeking the headquarters of the Duke of Cumberland and there finding an early market for what information he could give as to the Welsh Jacobites—to betray his own kith and kin, in fact, in return for his own previously threatened safety.

The first stage of his new journey was to New-

castle-under-Lyne, and thus his way lay through the village where the spies had been captured. Here, pursuing his enquiries, he heard of Chapel's escape and the starting of Iolyn in pursuit. Learning of the widow's share in that business, he got down in front of her poor thatched abode, boiling with mean anger and cowardly fury against her. Bursting open the door with his foot he strode inside.

"Where are you; you old beldame? You Jacobite hag?" he shouted.

But there was some one there quite ready to take him up. Though the first hurt dragoon was dead; having died within half an hour of Iolyn's leaving him; yet another had been brought in to take his place under the gentle old widow's care. One of the two from "John Webster's"; a corporal, shot through the leg, was now lying in the bed, his teeth shut tight upon his tongue, like a lid upon a cauldron, to keep down the fume of fantastic swearing with which his mind was bubbling over as the pain of his wound racked and pincered his nerves. He was practising rare self-denial and foregoing the dear relief of profanity lest he should shock his nurse. Thus the entrance of the blustering fop of a Maddox was as a godsend to him, and he opened upon the intruder with a good round flood of particular oaths

and cherished niceties of profanity, which only a trooper of that date could have compassed. They rolled upon his tongue, grateful as the trickle of sweet waters to the parched palate of the desert wanderer, and Maddox fell back half a pace, gasping through lips parted in sheer astonishment at the bear which he had so unexpectedly found denned with the hare.

Then a heavy jack-boot, spur and all, struck him in the neck, and the click of a carbine sounded from the bed. Turning, he made one leap to the door and another to the saddle, and like a flash was pricking away down the road, with the insult sticking in his gullet, for fear worse should befall him.

He was soon to be consoled however, for news of yesterday's retreat from Derby was already flying far and wide, and he was scarcely three miles beyond Newcastle, on the road to Stone, before he got a circumstantial account of it which raised his hopes and brought a dozen plans surging up in his mind at once. Now that the rebels had turned he felt, like everyone else, that the movement was doomed. Being doomed it carried doom to all its most prominent participators, and Pengraig was too notorious as a fervent Jacobite ever to receive pardon now

that he had actually been in arms. Whoever else found mercy, the "poetical lawyer" * was sure of sharp shrift.

Once outlawed or executed Pengraig could no more trouble Gwgan Maddox and so the said Gwgan opened his clammy lips and eased his breast of a huge sigh of relief—he was now free of danger from the forgery at least and so was at liberty to work for revenge. Thus as he rode his breast was a seething cauldron, wherein savage hatred of Meredith, of Iolyn, and of Pengraig, mingled with a ferocious desire to wreak untold tortures upon the scornful soul of Mari. As he dwelt upon what he would do to the latter his face flushed darkly, till at last he raised his eyes and cast a quick glance round, as if he feared any one should by any possibility guess the black thoughts in his mind—for even Gwgan Maddox could choke over them.

Plotting and scheming thus he presently reached the little town of Stone, where he was agreeably surprised to find a small party of horse just dismounting in the street. Riding closer he recognized the cornet in command and straightway fell to eliciting information.

"Ha! Kingdon! I understand you have chased

* This was Walpole's description of him.

back this beggarly rabble of Scotch and Lancashire riffraff. Is it true?"

"It is true that the Pretender has gone north again from Derby," responded the cornet drily; "but we do not know yet where they are intending for. Perhaps for Wales: I am here to find out if I can. They quartered in Ashbourne last night."

"That is not on the road to Wales from Derby," replied Maddox, pluming his confidence.

The cornet's tone had been none of the most cordial, but now he added a whisper which made the other pale for a moment. "It is understood that you yourself went to Wales to join the Jacobites, and it looks marvellously as if you had been on the way to Derby, but, finding yourself too late, had headed South instead, like a prudent man."

"Then you had better understand differently!" blustered Maddox in seeming righteous indignation; and as if not desiring to keep the thing quiet by answering in a whisper also. His virtue cried to the world for examination as he continued: "You will find that my servant, Chapel, has already been with your general, and that the boot is on the other leg!"

"So that fellow Chapel is your servant, eh?" returned the cornet, staring steadily at the other over

his horse's neck. "Then, you have come out as a spy at last! Well, well, I, at least, ought not to be surprised at that, considering our last meeting. Still I've no official notice to welcome you as a spy, but on the contrary, have been notified that you had gone to Wales to join the rebels. All the same there are pleasanter ways of riding than with the feet tied under the horse's girth, so that if you still insist that you are a spy and a traitor: why—d'ye understand?"

Maddox did understand but he was too cowardly to take the hint and ride quietly on. He tried to carry it off with a high front. "You will be glad, to-morrow, that you did not tie me. You will know then what His Grace the Duke of Cumberland thinks of me."

The last words came over his shoulder as he rode away.

"Ah," replied the other imperturbably, "you will find the Duke near Coventry and while you are speaking with him, kindly put in a word for me. Since you plucked me so clean at the tables I haven't anything left to buy my step with, and yet I don't want to live and die a cornet."

Maddox affected not to hear this parting shot but continued to move off at a walk. His direction

was still South, but just through the town he turned left, as though to find some new line of road by which to seek headquarters. He did not care to have Cornet Kingdon called upon for any report of his entrance within the outposts.

Meanwhile the dragoons were making the most of their bread and cheese and ale, swearing genially over the refreshment, and watching the horses tossing the half feed in the nosebags; for both men and beasts required the rest.

But hardly was the last bite between the teeth than Maddox came galloping back at top speed.

"Now, sir," cried he in triumph—triumph which yet left a sickly colour in his face—"mount your party quickly and you shall see whether I ever had any part with the wretched rebels. Within two miles of here, one of the principal of all these traitors can be taken prisoner if you do but move at once."

"I had rather you said that their principal troop of horse could be charged," growled the cornet, as he gave the order to mount one half of his party.

"Are you not going to mount all your men?" expostulated Maddox.

"D——n it! man. A dozen dragoons should

take the Devil prisoner, let alone one poor British gentleman."

Maddox ventured no more till the party were mounted.

"Now then?" growled the cornet to him, as he pulled down his tunic.

"In that direction," began Maddox, pointing across country. "You will go——"

"Nay, *you* will go," broke in the other grimly. "And you will go with a pistol at your ear, too. I am not going to be sent into any trap, my fine spy. So, march, my gentleman, and we'll follow. Now."

"But," began Maddox, with a face all piteous betwixt shame and fear.

"But—nothing," returned the other inexorably. "If you will meddle with men of action, you must take the consequences. Once more, March!"

"Very well, sir, I'll guide you," retorted Maddox in pettish desperation. "But the Duke shall hear of this——"

"He shall, without a doubt," put in the other with the same exasperating coolness. "The regulations provide for it—I have to make a report of all these sort of things."

The rest of the party caught the tone from their

leader, sulkily cursing things in general as they rode, so that Maddox tasted yet more fully the delights of his position. Then he grew feebly vicious, and, goaded into what he mistook for determination, "This way!" cried he at a turn of the road. "Faster!"

"Faster be hanged!" retorted the cornet. "We have other work for our horses than playing parish constables and apprehending vagrants."

The other did not deem it wise to reply and presently he pulled up to speak to a countryman in the road. "Still there?" demanded he.

"Yes sir. Never come an inch this road. But where's the guinea?" cried he as Maddox was moving off again.

"Damn your impudence!" was all the other's answer.

"Hold!" cried the cornet. Then turning to the countryman: "Did this man promise you anything?" he asked.

"He said if I watched that lane yonder he'd give me a guinea when he came back."

"Come, Mr. Maddox, pay as you go," said the officer, grimly jocose. "You can always get more at the tables, you know."

Maddox paid; his hand so shaking the while

that he fumbled the money and dropped some silver as well as the guinea.

"Keep it," said Kingdon laconically to the man, who picked it up with a dry smile. "Now sir," went on the cornet to Maddox. "March!"

"But we are here; there is the lane," protested the victim.

"Aw!" returned the officer ironically. "How truly intelligent! Now I come to think of it we *are* here! But we did not come to apprehend a *lane*, did we? It would be awkward to tie that on a horse and send it to the Duke at Meriden Moor."

"Well, in the house then," retorted the badgered Maddox.

"Which house? Show me."

For answer Maddox led the way a little farther on to the entering of a lane at the other end of which a cluster of thatches indicated the presence of a farmstead. "There," said he: "your man is in that house. Let him slip and you lose your commission."

A hot word was on the cornet's lips to reply, but the grizzled old sergeant brought his horse violently against his officer's knee. Kingdon looked around sharply but the sergeant's face was so especially

wooden that he read its meaning at a glance and so took the advice and bit his tongue.

The absence of retort emboldened Maddox and he lifted his rein, saying; "Well, Kingdon, I leave you to your duty; and now I'll just continue on to the Duke."

Before he could even put his horse about, however, a nod from the cornet instructed the dragoon on the other side of him, and the muzzle of a musket came cold under his ear, almost causing him to drop out of the saddle from fright and shock.

"Take charge of him, Durley," said the cornet. "If he attempts to escape, shoot him. Hartly will stay with you to help you."

Then the party turned and took the lane for the house.

A few minutes of mute suspense and then Maddox heard the swift reports of a couple of pistols. A burst of confused noises followed and then some fifteen minutes intervened—double torture to the dastard as he fidgeted between the silent pair of immovable dragoons.

Then the party reappeared, Kingdon with one arm in a sling, and one of the men with his head bandaged. Halting in front of Maddox the cornet turned to the prisoner beside him. With a grave

bow, "This, sir," said he in a voice vibrant with scathing scorn, "this is the most honourable gentleman who betrayed you."

And "Ah!" said Pengraig—and never another word did he utter on that occasion.

CHAPTER XVIII

ONLY once on all the long way to the Duke of Cumberland's headquarters did the prisoner break the silence which had held him since the recognition of his betrayer. They had marched for hours when suddenly he turned to Kingdon as if his anguish were no longer to be borne.

"Tell me," he broke out: "Why is it? What is there in our cause that it should seem thus to be cursed? that one poor pitiful dastard like Maddox should have power to ruin the endeavours of thousands—aye, of nations! Did we sin, or did our fathers sin? that all the fire of our hearts should yet issue only in impotence? Why is it?"

"Pardon me, sir, but I fear you are too hard for me," returned Kingdon with respect. "I am but a poor cornet of dragoons and a plain man—but I have ever noticed that a spy is a very potent instrument when things are aloft and moving."

"Ah, you do not understand," exclaimed Pengraig despairingly. "I mean, why did High God

permit—but I weary you and pray you pardon me. Tell me, sir, is your wound any easier ?”

“ Oh, it is nothing sir, I assure you. In truth, if it were not for the sling I should forget it completely.”

Pengraig understood and a faint sad smile stole out for an instant through the grief in his eyes. “ I thank you, sir, and indeed I am sorry for that shot,” said he with a winning concern in his voice and manner.

For it had happened that when the party came upon him at the farmstead he had been in the stable, girthing up to go, and it was his first pistol which wounded the cornet. His second had dropped the man whom they afterwards left behind at Stone with a bandaged head, and then, before he could draw sword in that narrow stall, the rest had piled upon him and overborne him by mere weight of numbers.

Maddox remained a prisoner also between his two guards, to whom were added the sergeant and another man, with strict orders to keep some fifty yards in rear, so that the sight of the man who had betrayed him might not add unneeded poignancy to the anguish of the one whom they all pitied.

But when at length they came into the presence of the Duke, Pengraig could scarce contain his hor-

ror as he saw his ward instantly recognized as one well known to be in the service of "the Elector" from the first. Then his horror changed to hot indignation as he further saw the other released and the cornet put upon his defence for his conduct to him. Kingdon was one, however, whom promotion had passed by, and he was therefore one less careful to oil his tongue in answering. He had, moreover, a justly grounded belief that Maddox had cleaned him out by cheating at play in other days, and he took no little satisfaction out of him while justifying his conduct to the Duke.

"The fellow was so shifty in his manner, sir, and so hang-dog in his looks, that I was bound to be suspicious of him. Moreover I knew him long ago for a rake-hell, and a cheat at cards, and other things as bad or worse, so that, taking all the appearances into consideration, I was naturally more than suspicious of him. As to his betraying his guardian into our hands, that argued nothing, since he was quite capable of doing it merely to save his own wretched neck. His protestations counted for even less than nothing, for he was always as notorious a liar as he was a cheat and the rest of it."

"A liar, sir! and a cheat!"—but it was the voice of Pengraig and not that of Maddox which chal-

lenged so indignantly. "Sir, I was his guardian and I never heard such heavy things even whispered of him. That he has become a spy—well, he was ever a Whig, and black and dishonourable as it is to be a spy, yet these other charges—sir, you make me hot! Can you——"

"Substantiate them? yes," took up Kingdon. "He was, of course, more than careful to keep such things from you and, perhaps, sir, he had the less difficulty in doing so, in that you were so completely taken up with—with—the notions which have brought you into your present sad position, sir.

"Nevertheless these things existed, as I and many another pigeon plucked by him well know. Oh, he was careful to keep upon the very foam and top of the most distinguished and exclusive vice. He was on the closest terms with my Lord this and the Honourable that, but the terms were those of a common debauchery."

The Duke interfered, for Maddox stood tongue-tied with sullen hate and cold confusion. Even so helpless and hopeless as his guardian now was, the spy yet felt all the mixture of dread, shame, and scowling defiance which he might have felt had their positions been reversed—had he been the prisoner and the other the free. Therefore he was grateful

when the Duke spoke, though he straightway cursed him in his heart for the answer which his speaking drew.

"But, Cornet Kingdon," interposed Cumberland, "you see now that you were mistaken and that Mr. Maddox was an honest and loyal subject. You will therefore, no doubt, wish to apologize for your conduct to him and shake hands with him."

"Sir," returned Kingdon warmly. "I hold His Majesty's commission: what would he say if he knew that I had bemired it by apologizing to a common spy? A British officer must be more careful of his honour than that if he wishes to retain even the mere toleration of his fellow officers in the army."

"The devil take your British officers and their commissions!" spluttered the Duke. "You are all as full of points and codes as if you were princes."

"I should be sorry if they were as empty of them as some Princes we know," put in Pengraig undauntedly.

Kingdon kept silent for a moment. "So like him," thought he to himself, referring to Pengraig. "He saw that I had gone quite as far as my commission was worth and so he interposed to turn the

Duke's anger on himself. But he is deep enough in the hole already without that——”

Nevertheless he could get no opportunity of putting in again, for the Duke had quite forgotten him in his new rage at the prisoner. In his heat his English failed him, with the exception of the commonest curses and military oaths, and his Royal Highness fell back upon German, which made his anger only appear ludicrous when spluttered and larded out against a man who did not understand it. In the impotence of his wrath he turned against Maddox and cursed him up hill and down dale for a spy and everything else of which Kingdon had accused him—and in this case English oaths and curses so nearly sufficed that all the world might understand.

Thoroughly demoralized, Maddox was mounting as if to ride out of reach of the tumbling abuse when—another shock—he found himself under new arrest till he could be put under bonds to appear against the man he had betrayed.

Truly he was the last man in the world for a beggar to envy.

From Meriden Pengraig was despatched next day under strong escort for London, there to be shut up in Newgate till some day of trial could be found;

while Maddox bent his whole energies to the destruction of Meredith. To have already compassed the end of one whom he hated—it is easy to forgive the man who injures us but not the man we injure—only whetted his ferocity to more closely pursue the other objects of his hate. He could now revenge himself upon his rival by dragging him to the gallows and also, in the same moment, upon the woman who had refused him, by the awful anguish he would thus inflict upon her.

“Yes,” muttered he to himself as he marched with the army. “Yes, we will see how you like it, Mister Meredith. You were looking forward to a pair of white arms about your neck—we’ll see how you like the hangman’s rope instead. When this rebellion was to be over you looked to ride to a bridal feast—we’ll see how you like to ride head downward on the sledge when they drag you to execution.

“And you, my high and mighty and most demure Mistress Mari: you are to enjoy yourself without stint. You shall stand by and see your father and your lover hanged on the same gallows, and then you shall look on while the common hangman strips the writhing figure you thought so handsome and watch while they cut the heart out and throw it into the

fire. Oh yes, you shall see the head chopped off like a bullock's, and you shall watch the saw at work cutting the precious body you loved into quarters, like so much beef, to be stuck over town gates. A fine thing then for you, Mistress Mari, to be kin to and in love with fly-blown pieces of putrid flesh scattered from one end of the country to the other! I'll teach you just what you were doing when you scorned Gwgan Maddox."

He had fallen in with Chapel again upon the evening of his arrival at headquarters, and from him learnt all that had happened since they parted at Wrexham. At the end of the narrative he had just opened his mouth to criticize, when the other struck coldly in with a blunt, "No, no; Mr. Maddox; not this time: not any more. We've had about enough of your plots: I'll plot it from now on. That is to say, I'll capture this Meredith and deliver him into your hands for you to do as you like with. Because you—you've told me so many different tales of what you want to be and seem and do, that I don't know what it is you really are after and neither do you yourself two minutes together. You pitch a plot and straight away fall in love with the first detail of it and forget all about the rest, till, when you wake up, you have to lay out a fresh

line altogether. You talk about Whig and Tory, but what you've wanted all along is to escape that forgery's consequence and get rid of this Meredith. Very well; we march north to-morrow. In two or three days we shall be within reach of Fidler's Ferry. Then we will get the loan of a troop of Hessians——"

"Yes," broke in Maddox; "these d——d English dragoons would let him slip if they could—they ought all to be shot for treason——"

Chapel smiled and nodded approvingly as he resumed—"and then we'll just drop down on that ferryman and I warrant you we'll find some way of opening his mouth. You'll have Meredith straight off then—and me, dear me; ho! ho! me, I'll have that Ned of the Clough. And I'll shoot that Ned of the Clough! I'll twist that Ned of the Clough's neck round! I'll screw his head off for Mr. Edward of the Clough! Whaow!"—and the rest of the villain's voice went out in an inarticulate scream.

CHAPTER XIX

WHEN Shackerly of Gwersyllt rode to rouse the Cycle he did his work well, and daylight of the following day revealed all the roads leading eastward to have each its dozen or more parties of riders; from the younger son with his modest single man, to the lord of a whole trev* with his score of retainers. The word was for Derby and, as the roads were bad and the distance great, the pace was easy, in order that they might not arrive with useless horses. Naturally, the younger men, riding lighter, rode also faster, and thus it was these who rested at the inns farthest from home that night.

For the same reason it was the same young men who, early next day, first got word of the retreat from Derby and its continuance through Ashbourne to Macclesfield for the north. The farther they went the surer they became that the circumstantial tale was true, and presently proof positive was forthcoming in a glimpse of a squadron of dragoons, going northwards by a road which crossed immediately in front.

* Here signifying a township or district.

There was no help for it. Words would not alter it. Nothing remained but a sorrowful return.

As these more forward ones bore back the news to those behind the more experienced elders recognised at once the instant necessity of carrying the news to Wynstay, to stop the rising before the land should be uselessly compromised for a cause that was lost. There was no thought now of sparing horse or man and thus it came about that shortly after the ensuing midnight Sir Watkin was roused to hear the fatal news with which all England was by that time ringing.

Lord Barrymore, more nervous than his host about the enterprise they had embarked upon, and so less able to sleep, had met the messenger first, and his aged face seemed doubly aged with the weight of the blow as he followed the candlebearer to the door of Sir Watkin's chamber.

"What shall we do now?" exclaimed he when he had told the news. "Shall we still go on raising men?"

"For what? and for whom?" broke out Sir Watkin fiercely. "Shall we ask men to venture all for a Prince who will not even come to command them?—who cares so little about them that he marches off as if they did not exist? Nay, to raise them now

would be murder; veritable murder. If Charles Edward has given up and gone back to Scotland, it means that he believes his cause hopeless. The crown of Britain cannot be seized in Scotland. If he turns his back upon the throne, we cannot bring it to him.

"No, we must send instantly and stop the rising, and meanwhile, before day breaks, disperse those already gathered, in order that they may escape all ill consequence. If it were not worth Charles Edward's while to join us, it is certainly not worth our while to die in vain for him."

But his anger did not last long. Presently grief broke out above the wrath, and he fell to lamentations for the dream that was dashed. "Oh that so great a stake should have been so meanly lost. What! did they start out to win without a risk? I should have thought that after overwhelming Cope they would have turned for nothing. And now to retreat without coming to the shock—Oh, it is ruinous!"

But neither anger nor grief could alter the situation, nor could they form any plot to save it, except that of sending three separate gentlemen to implore Charles Edward to retrace his steps and march at once to Wales.

The fate of this effort, however, may as well be told at once. The news of the retreat emboldened

the Whig Justices and constables as greatly as the news of the advance had formerly terrified them. These and the Government troops together scoured every lane and watched every road in Cheshire, until the retreat had continued so far north that all danger of a junction with the Welsh was over. Not one of the three gentlemen, therefore, could get through, and so Charles Edward was compelled by the chiefs, under the thumb of Lord George Murray, to forego halting a day at Manchester, from whence he passed on to Preston: to the tragic blunder of Carlisle: to Scotland and Culloden—and Wales was saved at least from the horrors of devastation; even if she were also at the same time denied the perilous honour of again playing a principal part in the terrible game of King making.

Months afterward Charles Edward learnt fully what he had lost by yielding to the council at Derby, and wrote to his father in mournful strain—"Mr. Barry arrived at Derby two days after I parted. He had been sent by Sir Watkin Wyn and Lord Barrymore to assure me in the name of my friends that they were ready to join me either in London or rise every man in his own country."

And so we write to Charles Edward's chance,
"Vale!"

CHAPTER XX

MEANWHILE what of Iolyn. On the night when he returned to Wynstay from his fruitless chase to Coed Cynan, he was too utterly done up for anything further but sleep that night. Next morning, however, he was early out and gone to rejoin Pengraig; carrying a verbal message from Sir Watkin. Unlike the members of the Cycle, he could not turn back when he heard the ill news, not even when he saw the dragoons. His fortunes lay with his foster-father in the Pretender's army, and so he must go on.

By many a wile and many a stratagem he slipped at last through soldiers, Justices and constables, till, late on the evening of Sunday, the eighth, he reached Derby, only to find the retreat an accomplished fact. Following next day on the track of the Prince, and not daring to make minute inquiries for fear of arousing suspicion, he overshot the trail of Pengraig at Ashbourne, and it was not until he finally overtook the Jacobite army, on its first march beyond Manchester, that he heard from William Vaughan of what had happened.

"Then Pengraig will be at Wynstay by this," said Iolyn; "and I have to start even once more for that place. I am like a kitten chasing its own tail for this last fortnight. Ah well! perhaps I shall get wind of poor Presgwyn on the way: I have to go over the same ground in any case."

He took the nearest road for Warrington, believing that it was there he should first pick up the trail of Meredith. But that town was now alive and ready to arrest all suspicious travellers, so that our rider, forced to deviate and still desirous of crossing the river, found himself chaffering with Jone Fidler over the ferry fee.

For Jone suspected him to be an escaping Jacobite and, therefore, one who would suffer extortion rather than delay.

Iolyn, however, had inquired the proper price when he inquired the way, and now he roundly told the ferryman that he would see him hanged before he would pay more. Then while he spoke a sudden gleam of cunning came into his mind and he set a trap for the other.

"D'you think," said he sneeringly, "because one gentleman paid you in gold the other night, rather than wait till daylight, that every other man wanting to cross is in just as great a hurry?"

"Who told thee he paid gold?" exclaimed Jone, starting back at the word.

But before Iolyn could answer he himself was startled in turn by a voice from the hut which cried cheerily, "Good day to thee, Iolyn, lad. By th' mass, but Aw'm fain to see thee!"

Looking hastily up, he was little the wiser of his sudden mystification to behold the new speaker advancing, with a twinkle of enjoyment in his eye as he continued, "Aw thought thou'd turn up soon or late if Aw no'but tarried here lung enough."

"Who are you? and how do you know me?" demanded Iolyn.

"Aw'm Ned o' th' Cloof, an' Aw know thee th' same way 'at thou knows a gentleman paid gowd here t'other neet. Aw guessed it."

"You could only guess it after some one had first told you my name and described me. Now where is Meredith?—for I take it that you must be friendly or you would not have spoken."

"What if Aw were paid to guide thee into some trap?" returned Ned caustically. "Such a thing's bin done afore to-day—an' at this same ferry, too."

Then, as the other looked scrutinizingly at him for a moment, he continued: "But thou'rt reet; Aw am friendly. Meredith keeps axin' for thee

whenever he comms round a bit, and he towd me weel what mak' of a lad thou wert. He said ther'd be no mistakkin' thee, and as soon as Aw yer'd thee Aw lippened (expected) naught else but thou wert Iolyn."

"In that case where is Meredith now?" demanded Iolyn.

"Where he's bein' well looked after—in a place on t'other side o' th' river. Aw'll tak' thee straight theer; never thee fear."

"All well and good. And I'll keep a pistol handy to your head as we go," replied Iolyn.

Ned laughed. "Aw lippen o' naught else. But thou'lt be weary o' howdin' it theer afore we gotten to th' far eend. It's a dal'd roogh road, lad."

"All the more need for the pistol then," retorted the other. "John Chapel might crop up at any corner of a rough road."

"Nay, he'll crop nōne up i' this gate yetton a while; John Chapel! Hast ta seen aught o' that chap lately?"

"I knocked him out of the saddle the other day. That was beyond Congleton, but the fools let him get away again. Do you know him too?"

"Aye, an' Aws' know him better another time," grinned Ned; "for Aw put some marks on him

wi' mi clogs th' last time Aw seen him. Aw gan it him wi' a wuther* and punced him th' hauve to t'dyeth."

"Half to death," repeated Iolyn savagely. "He'll go to the far end when once I have time to hunt him up."

"Aye, but happen he'll be huntin' thee first. For he intends seechin' this t'other lad, an' happen thou'lt find him soonest by tarryin' i' th' one place."

"With Meredith, you mean. In that case then you cannot take me to him too soon," answered Iolyn.

By this time they were aboard the boat.

"Sitha," said Ned. "He stood theer wi' his pistol i' one hond while he poo'd out th' two guineas wi' t'other. He'd bargain to pay me two guineas, an' he paid it like a mon i' th' spite o' what he knew were happenin'. An' happen that's why Aw'm takkin' thee to him, now."

When they were landed on the other side Ned turned to the ferryman. "Bear i' mind, Jone," said he; "Aws' hearken to naught tha' may say if thou has ony truck wi' yon Chapel or th' soldiers. Aws' do for thee, no matter what 'scuse thou mak's,

* Wi' a wuther = with all the strength of rage.

an' Aws' do it wi' mi clogs too. Mak' no mistake. Thou'rt fause (cunning) we o' knowen; an' thou reckons thysel' fauser yet. But thou'rt nōne fause enoo' to chet Ned o' th' Cloof."

As they struck away from the ferry Ned explained. "Yon Jone o' Fidler's is nōne a gradely mak'. I' th' dayleet he reckons to be a bit of a Quaker, but i' th' dark o' neet he'd stop onybody's wind for th' price of a new hatband. An' he'd sell me or ony o' th' rest of us chaps beheend our backs if he wer'na' feared o' my clogs. Aw've wondered a time or two what he'd think if Aw were to tell him—what's true—at Aw know wheer his brass is hidden. But to his deein' day he'd ne'er understond how one thief could know of another's brass an' yet not steyl it. He's an ill mak' of a mon, is Jone o' Fidler's."

While he talked Ned was leading warily away towards the nearest point of what was still, at that date, the great Delamere Forest. At the northern extremity of it the bluff sloped steeply down to the marsh through which the Weaver sluggishly discharged its reedy waters into the broad estuary of the Mersey. In a little hollow, hardly a clough, in the face of this bluff there dripped and matted a close-grown thicket of oak and ash, hazel and holly,

thorn and briar, and it was to this spot that Ned ultimately guided his companion.

Penetrating the depths by a trail so narrow and overhung that Iolyn—who had already left his horse at a woodman's cottage on the way—was forced to stoop, he finally halted in front of a nondescript building; plainly the handiwork of thieves and night lurkers. He did not knock on the door, but, taking down a rusty horseshoe from the wall, struck three sharp blows upon the huge nail which had held it up. These three he followed with two and then one, whereupon the door flew open and from the black interior emerged a surly visaged fellow whose eyes blinked in the light.

"That thee, Jonty?" said Ned, pleasantly, by way of greeting.

"Well, it's nōne th' Lord Chief Justice, nor yet Owd Nick."

"Nay, thou'st no need to tell us thou'rt not th' Owd Lad, Jonty: thou'rt nōne hondsone enoof. He'll ha' naught to do wi' aught as feaw (ugly) as thee. But, sitha, lad, Aw've brought a visitor—no, ne'er mind combin' thy yure (hair); an' there's not time to wesh thysel' now. Besides th' tide's not in yetton, an' naught less'll wesh thee clean."

"Aye, Ned lad, tha keeps on makkin' gam' o'

me, but Aws' pounce thee t' òne o' these days, afore tha'll give o'er," replied Jonty, with a grin as comprehensive as a mortgage.

"Ne'er mind me. How's yon lad?"

"Better; a bit better. But he's rare an' weak yet for o' that."

"Dal it! Jonty. What doesta poo sich a face for? If he's wick (quick) at o' then he's worth a church-yard full o' dyed uns. By th' mass! thou'rt as ill as an owd hen crowin'. Come in," ended Ned, turning to Iolyn.

Following him, the latter found himself in what seemed a large room, as well as he could make out by the light from the door and the glow of the fag-got fire from a wide hearth on the right hand side. Window there was none, and so he could only guess at the figures of two men, whose faces were picked out in ruddy outline by the flicker of the fire, as they lay with heads in the light and feet away in the gloom, turning to look over their shoulders for a glimpse of the newcomers.

Ned greeted them both. "That thee, Juddie? That thee, Noggin?"

"That thee, Ned?" answered they both, and forthwith returned to their steady gazing into the coals. Ned went forward into the darkest corner of

the room. "Here's th' dur," said he to Iolyn. "Com' inside."

As he spoke he opened a door in the blackness and at once stepped through into a room just as light as the other was dark. Inside, Iolyn paused to look round. At a broad, low window sat a little wizened man, clad in a coat a world too big for him: a coat which had once been a brave one, but which now was sadly stained with snuff, hard wear, and much beer. On his head was stuck a ragged bob-wig and on his nose a pair of horn spectacles, for on his knees he held a bulky volume, labelled with a title then famous in every stable in England, "The Masterpiece of Farriery," by Gervase Markham.

"Aye," said Ned to Iolyn, as he indicated the one whose spectacled eyes were staring at him over the tome. "This is th' doctor 'at's tending Meredith. He're used to be a bit of a cow doctor, an' he's gotten a book theer 'at he studies out of afore he tries aught fresh on his patient."

"*Duw!*" exclaimed Iolyn in swift grief as he thought of what Meredith must have suffered.

Ned caught his meaning and took it up. "Aye, lad; but what wouldst thou ha' said if we'd done naught, an' so letten him dee for th' want of even so little as a cow doctor can do: What?"

“ You are right ! I should have said hard things. But let me see him now. I am heavy to see him : show me.”

The doctor laid down his volume and got up. “ This way,” said he, leading to where a great sheet of canvas, which had been a ship’s sail, hung across the farther end of the room. Drawing this quietly aside he motioned them to step beyond, and Iolyn, first and eager, could not suppress another exclamation of grief as he found himself bending over a rude bedstead, whereon was lying the still and wasted form of Ithel Meredith, lord of Presgwyn.

“ Och ! och !” he broke out under his breath. “ Oh ! to look at him and to think of the man that bowed good-bye to Mari.” He took the thin hand in his own, wondering the while that the eyes did not open.

“ Nay, he’ll not waken,” said the doctor. “ He was in some pain, so I gave him a sleeping mixture. He’ll be better when he rouses agen ; but that’ll not be this side of dark, for I gave him the same dose as a thoroughbred horse—him being a gentleman.”

“ The same as a horse !” Iolyn laughed wearily. But half-way in the laugh he caught his breath.

"And will he live? Do you think he'll live?" he went on eagerly to both.

"Yes, he'll pull through now all right; especially since it seems he'll have a friend to unburden his mind to; for that has been as much against him as the bullet almost."

"Aye," put in Ned. "Never fear. If thou'd seen him five days sin' thou'd ne'er be feeart for him ony moor. Aw said then 'at if he poo'd through that he'd live forever. Yigh; he's wo'th o' th' dyed uns 'at e'er were buried."

Iolyn wrung his hand with a grip that fairly astonished the caustic Ned. "Why, lad, thou'st gotten a gradely gripe i' thy hond. By th' mass! if thou con no'but get that gripe on Chapel's throttle aw reckon he'd be fain to swop it for my clogs, even."

The other grinned weakly while he took a gentler clasp of the doctor's hand. "If there is anything that I can ever do!" said he, trying to brace the tremor in his voice. "If money, or fighting, or anything else, can help you after this——"

"Say naught moor just yet, lad," broke in Ned. "Happen we'st want moor nor thou bargains for. Aw reckon tha' has a good notion o' what we are, here?"

"I care not what else you are to other men. To me you are the men who nursed my best friend—bar Pengraig. That wipes out all scores with me."

"It's a pity th' judges are nōne o' th' same opinion," answered Ned drily. "An' agen, thou'rt forgettin'. Aw geet my pay afore Aw did a hond's turn for him. Lad! he bargaint to gi'e me two guineas for showin' him th' road to a crossin', an' then, though he were weel sure 'at Aw'd betrayed him, he wouldno' break his word. 'Here is your money' says he—that's th' mak' of a mon for me."

"An'—aw'll tell thee what. If he were weel an' hearty tomorn Aw'd rob him if Aw could—though he'd be a wick un to try that gam' on—but Aw'll see John Chapel i' hell afore Aw'll let him or onybody else do an ill turn to th' lad while he lies theer like that."

Iolyn extended his hand again but Ned drew back. "Nay; thou's yerd naught yetton about how th' lad coom here. Thou axes naught."

"I have no need. John Chapel did it."

"Aye, but why?" said Ned.

"Didn't he tell you?"

"If he tow'd aught at o' he tow'd it to th' Narker. Aw yerd naught, an' th' Narker's dyed an' cannot tell us aught," returned Ned in a puzzled tone.

"Well, what guess do you make?" asked Iolyn.

"None. There was a papper on th' lad, an' th' doctor here read it out to us, but it were no' but a business letter. We could mak' naught on't, 'speshly as th' Narker had said—when he fust come to me about th' job—'at this were a Government affair, an' 'at if we could capture this lad bout (without) hurtin' him we should get our pardon fro' th' King hissels'. We did it—a thisen—" and Ned ran rapidly over the history of the waylaying of Ithel, as we know it, up to the kicking of John Chapel. "An' at th' after Aw'd done puncin' him," continued the narrator, "Jone o' Fidler's went through him as he lee an' we found ninety gowd guineas on him: so tha' sees we'n bin weel paid aforehond for what we've done since for th' lad.

"Nay, bide a bit till Aw tell my tale out. At th' break o' day, th' doctor here, comin' whoam fro' prowlin' on th' Manchester road, drops across th' lad in a ditch. If he'd met him wick an' whol' he'd ha' brought him to a stond for his brass, but findin' him so nee done for he thought he'd try his hond at doctorin' him up agen. So he brought him here.

"Noggin an' Jonty were for finishin' him off an'

havin' done wi't, but when Aw fund it were th' same lad Aw tow'd 'em Aw'd pounce 'em a bit if they didno' mak' a less din. Then we had him into this bed an' geet th' owd doctor a book for to study in, an' he picked up a wig fro' somewheer—he says a mon con study better wi' a wig; wigs keepen th' brain moor equal he thinks—an' so we've done what we con fro' that time to this.

“Nay, howd on a bit,”—for Iolyn would have interrupted with thanks and queries—“A neet or two after, this same Chapel turns up agen at th' ferry an' tries to buy Jone o'er. Jone stowed him off an' coom away, but he ne'er tow'd me about it till Noggin spoke; for Noggin had been hid close by, unknown, an' yerd it o'. That's why Aw'm nōne trustin' Jone o' Fidler's till Aw've bin an' seen him agen.

“An' now let's yer what thou has to say?”

What Iolyn had to say did not include any excuses for Ned's conduct either in guiding Meredith into the trap or in tending him afterwards. He let one balance the other so far as words went, and simply said, “I suppose you know by this time that Meredith was mixed up with this affair of Prince Charles Edward's?”

“So likely: he's just that mak' of a lad!”

“ Well then, since this retreat things are altered and we shall have to get him away from here as soon as ever it is possible to move him.”

“ An’ that’ll be mony a day, yetton—an’ besides, which way is he to go ? Th’ roads are swarmin’ wi’ redcoats,” answered Ned.

“ He must go into Wales and we’ll take him by water. Meanwhile the thing is to make sure of Fidler. Can you manage him ? ”

“ Aw’m hardly sure, he’s one o’ that mak’ ’at saves every penny. He doesna’ rob for summat to keep him alive or because he con do naught else, like th’ rest on us. He robs for th’ sake o’ havin’ more brass to hide an’ think o’er. But Aw’ll do what Aw con—by th’ Mass Aw’ll cob him into th’ river if Aw con do no other gate.”

“ If money will do it,” said Iolyn eagerly; “ then tell him he shall have forty guineas the day we are safe out of this.”

“ Aw’m feart yon Chapel ’ud gi’e double and buy him o’er our yeds a-that gate,” returned Ned. “ What makes yon Chapel so keen on ? Government chaps are nōne so keen every day—even for rebels.”

“ You are right—this is a private affair.”

“ Oh! Well, as Aw were sayin’, Aw lippen Aw

could do best wi' Jone Fidler bout brass. But it's different wi' these chaps inside; they mun oather ha' brass or else goo out and look for some. Now, th' doctor here fund forty odd guineas on th' lad, but him an' me we kept it quiet——"

"Never mind, use it if you can do any good with it," broke in Iolyn: "and I've got as much again if that will help you at all."

"Nay, lad, steady a bit. Keep that forty o' thine for another day; we're nōne gone yetton. An' here, put thee this t'other forty o' th' lad's i' thy own pocket too for a while, an' Aw'll bargain wi' th' chaps for them to ha' so mich apiece when it's o'er. Then a couple on us mun go an' talk to Jone o' Fidler's——"

Just at this moment the door opened and Jonty stuck his head inside. "Weesch! Ned! We con yer summat outside."

CHAPTER XXI

NED looked quickly and questioningly at Iolyn, but the lad's "Are we even too late with Jone Fidler already?" showed him at once that no treachery was there.

"Stond ready," he whispered to the doctor, who instantly drew a pair of brass pistols from beneath the flap of his waistcoat and faced the window. Then he led the way back into the dark room again. "Dowse that fire!" commanded he beneath his breath to Noggin.

Scarce was this done than they heard a hasty step outside, retreating from the door. Then a slight hiss became distinctly audible and before Juddie could more than finish his whisper of "Ecod! what's that?" a deafening explosion burst in the door, with part of the wall as well.

"Th' sodiers! by th' mass!" ejaculated Jonty, and as if in answer there came the sound of heavily booted feet crashing over twigs and brambles, and a clamour of shouts in a foreign tongue as in through the gap burst a throng of Hessian soldiers.

Instantly the room was lit and deafened by a simultaneous volley from the five within. Four of the foremost Hessians piled in a writhing heap upon the floor, and a second volley immediately added three others. Then as the rest hung hesitating at the door, Ned seized a blunderbuss from somewhere in the dark and emptied it into the throng.

With wild cries of dismay they broke and fled back into the thicket, but hardly had the five time to reload than the doctor's voice was heard shouting, "This way, a couple of you!"

Dashing in to his help Iolyn and Ned saw that the window was smashed inwards, while half-a-dozen muskets were thrusting through and firing wildly at the opposite wall. The doctor was coolly kneeling under the window, pistols ready, and now, as a couple of the most eager of the Hessians leaped in, he put a pistol up to each body and shot them from where he knelt. At the same moment Ned pulled loose with both pistols into the crowd of heads, while Iolyn, who had seized a blunderbuss from Noggin as he passed, sprang with a mad laugh to the window and fired right along the faces of those nearest. Here, too, the repulse was as complete as in the other room and weapons were swiftly reloaded against another attack.

Up to this every advantage save that of numbers had been with those inside, but now the Hessians were warned of what they had to expect and so became more wary. This turned the odds completely, for the bush was dense right up to the very eaves of the house, which again was a mere patchwork of driftwood, logs and thatch. Fire would lick it up like a stack of faggots and the bush gave complete cover to anyone applying it.

Ned knew it well. "They'll burn us out if we tarry here," said he at once. He turned to the darkest corner of the room, just beyond the inner door, and seemed to drag down the wattle wall. Then he flung open another door behind it. "Come lads, we mun be shiftin'. Doctor, thee an' Jonty lap yon lad up an' carry him out this gate. Juddie, thee tak' th' lantern an' show 'em a leet through th' tunnel. Noggin, thou'll go fust wi' thy pistols ready, while me an' Iolyn keepen this eend till yo' gotten clear off. Hei yo'!" (Hie you!)

Hastily rushing to the bed the doctor wrapped up his patient in the blankets. Then, placing him on a rude litter which had evidently been used before, he and Jonty came swiftly back with their heavily drugged burden to where Juddie stood ready with a lantern to light them.

Already the fire had been applied outside and by this time the crackling of flames overhead betokened that the thatch was well alight. As the litter and its bearers disappeared Ned spoke. "It's a bit of a tunnel through a shouther o' this hill. About forty yards on an' then dayleet an' a path to th' river. We ha'n a boat theer."

They two stood at guard, each with a belt full of extra pistols and a double-loaded blunderbuss in his hand; for the place was a veritable armoury. Then a sound of shouts and shots came through the tunnel behind them and straightway Ned turned. "Come on," he shouted. "Jone Fidler mun ha' shown 'em. Couch!" (Stoop!)

The floor was smooth and the two went swiftly.

The exit had indeed been betrayed and the three men with Meredith had all dropped at the first volley, fired by a party ambushed not four yards away. But Noggin had escaped the first blast, and was now fighting with the stubborn courage of a bull-dog, surrounded by the Hessians.

Help came too late to save him, though not to avenge him. Not a shot was wasted; not a trigger pulled save at arm's length range, and the two who fell to the blunderbusses fell almost blown in twain.

The pistols followed instantly, each with its mass of slugs, while the bidogan in that red right hand was like lightning in its stroke. The soldiers had been a dozen in ambush: three only escaped to rejoin the ranks where the rest of the troop came crashing through the bushes towards the sounds of the firing.

"Come lad! look to thysel' now!" shouted Ned, starting to run.

But Iolyn was stooping to lift Meredith. "Not without him," he muttered as he lifted the blanketed form.

Ned, looking back over his shoulder, saw the sight and stopped irresolute. "Well I'll be d——d! He'd sooner be kilt! An' Aw'm to be slain, too, for o' he'll drop that. Well, here gwos." *

With the word he dashed back and seized the loaded musket of a dead soldier. At that moment the officer leading the Hessians appeared in view. Instantly the report of the musket rang through the wood, and the officer pitched headlong down the slope.

His fall checked the whole line, and the men drew back for an instant deeper into the shelter of the

* In the same way that stone makes "stwon" instead of "stooan": bone, "bwon," etc.

thicket, from whence they began a wild blind fusillade, which could hurt nothing because they dared not come out to take aim.

“This road now!” cried Ned to Iolyn. “Mind thy feet: it’s narrow underfoot. We s’ do ’em yet if we looken sharp.”

Evening was just beginning to gloom and the path was one only for those who knew it. What with this and the check given to the Hessians, it was speedily apparent that the two were gaining ground, even in spite of the burden which Iolyn carried. But soon they came to the outermost fringe of the thicket at a point where the open ground stretched away, for some two fields’ breadth, between them and the marsh. Here the going was so much better that they had won three-fourths of the way across before a great shout from behind told them that they were discovered.

“Aye, stond and skrike!” quoth Ned with a grin. “Stond and skrike for about another two minutes, an’ then yo’ may stond forever for o’ th’ catchin’ of us yo’ll do.”

But the pursuers had no intention of standing and shouting. As fast as their heavy jack-boots would allow, they ran down in full cry; each man of them pantingly eager to win the price which a

wild scream in their rear was proclaiming on the heads of all three fugitives.

"Oh, if Ithel were but well enough to run!" ground out Iolyn between his clenched teeth: "then I would stop that screaming for ever. That is John Chapel egging them on and yet I am forced to run."

"Aye, an' yon's Jone Fidler, showin' 'em th' gate (road) and yet Aw'm forced to run too," answered Ned. "But here we are at th' edge o' th' moss (marsh). Now keep close, an' step wheer Aw step, foot for foot, an' when they tryen to follow thou'lt yer 'em splash in o'er th' yed; for even Jone Fidler knows naught o' this path."

Two hundred yards or so in front of them swelled a green knoll, making a firm island some two or three acres in extent, and towards this Ned was heading by a seemingly zig-zag and haphazard line. When as yet they had still some forty yards or so to cross, however, a babel of new cries rose at the edge of the marsh behind them.

"What did Aw tell thee?" chuckled Ned again. "An' this bit of a knowe i' th' front—once we gotten to that we're safe. Con t' last so furr wi' thy bor'n?" (burden).

Iolyn nodded, he had no breath left for speech. Ankle, nay, half knee deep, he ploughed along

with his burden, and Ned, glancing at him over his shoulder, broke out with deep approval.

“Lad! thou’rt built as fine as a woman an’ yet thou’rt as strong as a horse, an’ tha’rt all o’er a bulldog: By th’ mass! Aw’d like to see thee at Owdham Wakes or Rachda’ Rushbearin’, for there’s some rare lads theer for feightin’. But just another strid’ or two an’ then!”

With the last word they stepped out on to the firm ground of the island, whose gentle crest swelled up from right under their feet. The edge o’ dark was falling lower and lower as they panted up, and mist wreaths were already filming over the wet waste as they paused at the top; one to rest and gasp for breath, and the other to look behind.

A sharp oath of anger from Ned caused Iolyn to turn and look also. Then his dry lips parted in a savage grin as he beheld some half dozen Hessians, led by the unmistakeable figure of the ferryman, filing across by the very path they had just quitted.

“Oh then, Jone o’ Fidler’s,” began Ned, grimly apostrophising the figure approaching. “Aw begin to know thee better. Fause! Aye thou wert olez a fause ’un but Aw never thought thee as fause as thou shows thysel’ now. Yigh, Aw’ll own up, Jone, thou had us o’ for fools, for thou mun ha’ watched

us neet after neet to larn that path; an' that too, when thou knew weel what we'd ha' done if we'd fund thee.

"An' now thou'rt usin' what thou larnt. Aw've yerd say 'at whatever it is a mon wears (spends) time i' larnin' it'll com' in useful some day. And so will this larnin' o' thine, Jone; for it'll save thee fro' o' sickness or doctor's fees.

"Aye, that's reet, come thee forr'ad, Jone, owd lad—an', by Him that made me!* Aw'll gie thee sich a welcome as'll do thee forever!"

During this speech Iolyn had taken his burden to lay it down on the farther slope out of the possible line of fire. When he came back Ned read his face, and answered it instantly. "Aye, we mun feight it out here. There's no'but th' haue a dozen foreigners an' one dal'd Judas. We'll mak' as if we were feeart, an' run this twothri steps o'er th' top as if we ne'er would stop agen. Then as soon as we're out o' th' seet we'n check an' couch down. That way we s' surprise 'em, for they'll come o'er this knowe like schoo' lads. Then we'n let into 'em."

Suiting the action to the word, there was scarcely

* Another common form of oath in the same districts as "by the mass!"

time for more than to reload musket and blunderbuss as they lay waiting, before they heard the panting of their eager pursuers racing up the slope.

"John Chapel is not with them," muttered Iolyn savagely. "I saw the cur jackanaping and snarling on the edge of the marsh but never daring to follow."

Then the fleetest of the Hessians showed their faces over the rise, and the two stretched up and fired, muzzles touching, into them. Both pistols next, and then the two hindermost of the soldiers turned and fled in panic at such a deadly ambush, leaving their comrades lying on the sward, gasping and dying.

But one; the one who had guided them; Jone o' Fidler's Ferry; had come to his last action in this world. Surprised as completely as the rest, he yet recognised in the same flash that for him at least there was no fleeing back. He was the hindermost of all, but he kept straight on for Ned, hands spread to catch a hold.

Ned dropped the pistol and stooped forward. "Aw gan thee fair warnin', Jone!" he cried. As they came within reach both darted out the grip, but Ned was quickest and with a clutch of the ankles turned the other full length backwards down

the slope. Then, swift as lightning, he leaped and kicked just as the head of Jone touched the ground. The heavy, iron shod clog struck him fairly in the temple with a crash of shattered bone: one single shudder ran through the frame and stirred the limbs, and then Jone Fidler's corpse lay still and white; while still, and white, and tenderly upon it, shone softly down the evening star's first ray.

"Aw gan thee fair warnin', Jone, an' Aw've kept my word," said Ned o' th' Cloof, in grim quiet, to the thing at his feet.

Then turning to Iolyn. "We're safe, at last. Aw'm th' only mon left livin' now 'at knows his way through this moss."

CHAPTER XXII

WHERE the other slope of the green island met the marsh again, it was fringed by a belt of catkin willows, strong and pliant. "We'n cut another litter out o' yon," said Ned. "It'll tak' us bwoth o' our time to get through wi' this lad, even if we ha'n saved him so far."

Few minutes sufficed for the fashioning of the litter and then the two lifted their burden and set forth anew by a path which even Ned was dubious of. "Yon poor owd doctor made a good job o' sendin' this bur'n o' ours to sleep," said he as they floundered forward. "An' it's well he did,"—as he slipped to his knees in the mud.

"Is there much more of this?" demanded Iolyn in savage anxiety.

"Nay, we s' come on a water lane i'now: th' one we keepen th' boat in."

True enough they presently entered a patch of tall reeds and dwarf willows, and pushing through these Ned checked upon the edge of a livid strip of stagnant water, which in the closing darkness

looked like the tongue of some foul pestilence, whose breath was the clammy vapour reeking up from the miles of rotting reeds and ooze.

"Steady now," said Ned, as he stepped aboard the boat at his feet.

Carefully following, Iolyn breathed a great sigh of relief as they laid their burden down upon the thwarts. "Ah! he'll rest easier now. Thank God he did not wake while we were carrying him. That would have torn him to pieces."

Ned was busy pushing off and as they went along the lane the other could see, by the light of the stars and the reflection of the water, that the boat also was a nondescript of the thieves' own building, like the house still blazing redly against the bluff behind. Almost flat bottomed; its gunwale was yet so high above the thwarts as to look like the bulwarks of a miniature ship, so that it would not leave much of any occupant in view. Moreover its timbers were of stout oak, and more than one bullet scar was plainly visible to witness of hot work seen at some time or other.

"Aye," said Ned, divining the thoughts of the other: "we used to tak' this boat when we went down to see if there were aught to be gotten from among th' ships by Liverpool. Yigh, it's bin i'

some roogh jobs, but Aw reckon it's done its last do o' that mak'," ended he mournfully.

No more was said as they pulled or poled along, until at length they emerged from the reeds into the river proper. This was the Weaver and they continued down it till they opened the wide estuary of the Mersey itself and Ned drew in his oars.

"Which way now?" said Iolyn.

"Nay, lad, thou'rt th' gaffer now. In that moss we'n just left: in that house 'at's brunt beheend us; or up at Fidler's ferry, Aw were th' gaffer of o' 'at coom. But Aw'm nob'dy now; Aw've noather kin nor come-fro' ony moor. Aw'm not talkin' o' my feyther's house and folk, for sich a gallows-wastrel as me can ha' naught to do wi' a feyther or a gradely whom'. But whom', an' friends an' country are what Aw've just lost, for yon 'at's brunt, an' thoose 'at lien slain, an' that stretch o' moss and forest 'at Aw cornt go back to, were o' 'at Aw had by way of ony o' th' three.

"Ill as they were, Aw had no better, an' Aw thought as well on 'em as Aw could—me 'at should ha' been hung lung sin' for no'but th' first o' mony things Aw've done.

"But it's o' ended wi' now, an' so, lad, thou'rt

th' gaffer fro' this on. It's thee at mun say wheer we gwoen."

For answer Iolyn reached his hand across and over the inert form of Meredith they two shook hands in unspoken compact.

As they dropped the clasp, Ned at his forward thwart picked up and stepped the mast and rigged the low lugsail it carried.

"We want to get to Wales," said Iolyn, as he shipped the rudder. "We can't cross the open sea in this boat and so we must get a passage in some coaster out from Liverpool. There may be difficulty in that and there may be none; but if our guineas won't bribe a captain then our pistols must persuade one. So we'll hold down the river and board the likeliest."

Ned was a perfect pilot and his skill was of all advantage as he took the helm, for the tide was just swelling to the full against them. Behind them slowly opened the silvery fan, which white armed Luna lifted in the heavens to herald her own gracious rising, and presently, all full and soft the tender smile of Night's white queen uncurtained to the world, and the glamour of it stole along, past and ahead of them, to wash with sweet enchantment all the eerie reaches of the whispering river, and to

break in dim auroras on all the elfin outlines of the spectre ships at anchor.

The new light enabled the voyagers to judge better what vessel appeared most suitable to steer for, but it was not till they had passed the port that Iolyn at length decided. Here, farthest down the river and well over to the Cheshire shore, was a good sized coasting smack, bearing no sign of life.

"Aye," commented Ned, as they pointed for her quarter; "but keep a pistol handy, for they'll tumble up from below like whelps from a wisket (basket)."

As they came close enough, however, Iolyn read the name, "Myvanwy. Rhuddlan," and he felt at once that the thing was half done. "She's Welsh, and no Welsh skipper will refuse us, I know."

Nevertheless, hardly had they leaped aboard,—Ned with a looped line to drop over the nearest belaying pin,—than a great shaggy head with a forked red beard popped up from the cabin hatch.

One glance and then the captain's body followed as he sprang nimbly up with a drawn knife in his hand and a furious "Cotsplut!" choking out through his hairy lips.

But Iolyn was already well into a speech in

Welsh. "Ah! Shon Goch! then I've found you at last. Diaoul! but I've been looking for you all along the river. I wanted a passage to Rhuddlan and here you have very nearly missed this tide. Still, if you brisk about a bit; lively!—but give me your hand, Shon Goch." *

This guess at the name, safe enough in view of that red shock of hair and beard, worked like magic. The tone helped also, and the captain stopped short, his knife lowered, as he answered in a relieved voice, "Splut! I thought you were river-pirates. But I don't remember you."

"No and I have not time to stop and explain. Here; give me a hand here to help our passenger aboard. He is sore wounded and we want to get him home to his own country."

"Och! and how did he get his hurt?" said Shon Goch pityingly.

"Under the white cockade. That is why I came to you, for it is well known that you love the White Rose of Arno."

"Och, sure! and of what family is he?"

"Meredith of Presgwyn."

"Presgwyn! that is enough. And we'll have him down to my cabin at once. So, gently now.

* Shon Goch = John the Red.

Steady; steady," for Iolyn was already lifting the burden over the rail where Ned and the Captain stood ready to receive it.

Hardly was Meredith laid gently in the bunk than Shon Goch was back on deck, swearing and brisking about as he ordered his crew of two men to be lively in getting under weigh. The two rushed to get up the anchor, while Ned lent a hand to the Captain at the halyards, and the clank of capstan and the whimper of sheaves were like music to Iolyn's impatience.

Then he jumped to take the skipper's place with Ned, in order that Shon might lash the tiller before he sprang away to hoist the jib, with a torrent of hearty profanity which told how much his heart was in the work.

All in a moment, as it seemed, the anchor came dripping, muddy, up; the captain was back at the tiller; the jib caught; the great brown belly of the mainsail filled, and the smack swung away on the heel of her own shadow as sweetly as my lady moves in the minuet, while Iolyn heaved a great sigh of relief as he muttered to himself, "I've cheated you this time; Gwgan Maddox. And as soon as Pres-gwyn is well again I'll cheat you once and for all—I'll cheat you of life itself."

CHAPTER XXIII

FROM the short chill days of December, when Shon Goch steered the "Myvanwy" out of Liverpool, till well along into April, Meredith lay at guess betwixt life and death, Iolyn alternating the while betwixt hope and fear, despite the unshaken dictum of Ned that, "th' lad" would pull through. "If thou'd seen him as Aw seen him first, thou'd ne'er gi'e him up agen till he're buried," Ned would retort to all spoken forebodings.

The case, too, was made all the worse by the need for constant change of hiding places during the first three months. On the morning when, upon the swell of the tide, the smack came calmly up to Rhuddlan, Iolyn had made no more ado but boldly claimed asylum for his charge at Bodelwyddan. Bodelwyddan himself, near kinsman to Wynstay, had answered by immediately coming down, "horse, foot, and dragoons" as Ned phrased it, to carry the wounded man across the flat to a snug chamber of his house, and here for a full month Meredith bode, mending a little on the whole.

But on a day one came from Rhuddlan with a copy of the proclamation there stuck up; a proclamation which offered no less than a thousand guineas for the capture of Ithel and Iolyn, together with a free pardon to any person hitherto aiding and abetting or concealing them.

Ned grinned sardonically when he heard the news. "Aw see now why yon Chapel were so keen o' catchin' Meredith. He'd ha' paid us fifty pound and then pocketed t'other. By th' mass! Aw'm ill off 'at Aw didno' pounce him to t'dyeth when Aw were on th' job. Aw could like some weel to see him. Yigh, he'd be as welcome as t'flowers i' May. Aw'd rive his dal'd yed off: him an' his chettin' us. Th' Narker desarved shootin' for havin' no moor wit (sense) than lettin' hissel' be gotten o'er by a skimp-skump of a cockney."

To have been made a catspaw of by Chapel roused Ned's ire to a degree totally unusual with him. No man likes to be done down in his own especial line; least of all such a stubborn craftsman as he of the Clough.

Then Iolyn made it worse. "Nay, Ned, it was not John Chapel who would have gotten any great sum, but the man he worked for—that is, if there was any great sum to be made. Chapel was not

doing his own errand, but working for a wage that another doled out to him. It is this other, too, who got this price put upon us."

"Oh!" returned Ned, still more hot. "By th' mass, that's wor' nor t'other. This new mon didno' even tak' Chapel's risk. Dal! my fingers fair itch to throttle him! Ecod! Aw'm wantin' to clap een on this new boggart!" (apparition, ghost.)

"And he wants to see you if I am not mistaken," answered Iolyn. "It is my belief that he counted on you when he had that pardon put in to anyone who had helped us but would betray us now. He thought a thousand guineas would fetch you at once."

"An' art ta nōne unyezzy? (uneasy)" returned Ned sarcastically.

"He may multiply the thousand by twenty and then I shall not be uneasy. If I had thought you were that kind of a man I should have put the bidogan through you long ago," said Iolyn contentedly.

"Ho! that's if Aw'd letten thee: if Aw hadno' punced thee to t'dyeth first," retorted the other genially. "But thou'rt reet, lad; Aw've done wi' that mak' o' wark now. Aw've gan' that trade up for good. Aw s' do no moor on 't."

"That is exactly what Chapel's master reckons on. He thinks you would jump at this chance of cutting loose from that. With the free pardon you would have also a fortune to begin life with again. Just what he calculates upon."

"Does he? Then he's off his horse. Even if Aw were still stickin' to th' owd job Aw'd get my brass i' my own way: Aw'd ha' nought gan me i' onybody else's way. My own road or nōne. But Aw didno' myen (mean) 'at Aw're done wi' hidin' an' sich like. What Aw myent were 'at Aw'd done wi' harmin' other folk. It's nōne worth while to live that gate, and if there's naught else, then when this business is o'er an' th' lad's gotten weel agen, Aw'll go back to wheer Aw were born, aye, if Aw ha' to wortch at weighvin' for a livin'."

"If I hear any more of your work and your weaving, then you'll hear a din," retorted Iolyn. "You have to share with me, for I've got something; enough to keep the two of us going at any rate. And that is beside what Meredith will expect of you when he comes round again."

"Oh!" Ned looked at him steadily for a minute or two. Then, "Aw'd like to ha' a nice, quiet, gradely feight wi' thee, lad. But happen tha wouldno' just reetly understond Lancashire ways—

so Aw think Aw'll tak' a bit of a smooke i' th' stead," ended he, charging his pipe with slow deliberation.

But though Iolyn was so free of doubt of Ned, yet he fully understood the altered aspect of things caused by this proclamation. All the country knew that they were at Bodelwyddan; a chance word might ruin them, therefore they must shift their quarters. He knew the difficulty there would be in persuading Bodelwyddan himself to this, and so he took advantage of that gentleman's absence from home on a hunting day, and, pretending sudden danger, got his charge carried away to Garthewin, leaving behind all manner of apologies.

This necessary move across the brown shoulder of Moelfre Isa', to the foot of its sister, Moelfre Ucha', threw the wounded man back, and hardly had he more than recovered when a search on the upper Elwy drove them down to Dolben for new shelter. Then move upon move, until at length the beginning of April saw them back a second time at Dolben, where Meredith so gained in strength that when, in May, a final party of dragoons made search along the Elwy, he could first lie out for a few hours and then be taken across and hidden in the great cave of the Cefn in front of the house.

Here they stayed till June was leafy over the land, and here they were when there came a letter to hand,—brought by Peake of Perthewig, who had been on a jaunt to Chester—a letter which made Iolyn turn sullen and Ned grin.

They had heard of Pengraig's capture during their stay at Bodelwyddan and had heard also that his wife and daughter had instantly journeyed to London in order to do what they could for him.

Iolyn had then found means to let him know of Meredith's escape and present condition. He did not name the place where they were sheltering, for fear of the letter falling into wrong hands, and so was not greatly surprised at receiving a passionate appeal from Mari, beseeching him to let her know their hiding place, that she might come and nurse the man she loved.

"Exactly," was Iolyn's comment. "Just like a woman! She would come posting up here with all the medicines and half the doctors in London, so that the whole army could follow and nab us, for all she would dream of harm. But I'll write again as though I hadn't received her letter, and perhaps Ithel will be well enough to move by the time her next appeal comes. Once he can mount and ride, then I don't mind her coming, for we can give any

spies the slip and there's always Snowdon to fall back upon."

But when her next letter did arrive, they were at Dolben the first time, and Meredith was far indeed from being well enough to mount and ride. This time then he put his comment on paper as an answer to her letter, and was more astonished than Ned when, in her reply, she bewildered him with reproaches. She did not want to wait till Ithel could ride; then she would only be a burden and an added danger to him. She wanted to come now, while he was ill and helpless and needed a woman's care. In her heat she said that she would not come later if she were not allowed to come now. And so on, etc.

Another set of letters passed between them and then came this one which put Iolyn out and made Ned's tongue take wondrous edge as he alternately made a grim jest at the other's consternation, or apostrophised nothing in particular.

Mari had arrived at Chester, having come by sea, and now from the house of one of Meredith's kin had despatched a last and most pathetic appeal.

Her father had not yet been tried, she said, but his trial could not much longer be delayed, and both her love and duty demanded that she should

be in London to help and sustain him when he should be finally brought to the bar. But meanwhile she was racked with anxious grief for Ithel, who, she had come to fear, was slowly dying. Why was the answer to her letter always the same? Why was it always hoped that Ithel would be well enough to write presently, and then why did that presently never arrive? Alas! she had begun to feel that the man she loved was either dying or already dead. How should a man, however severely wounded, lie so long in such desperate case? Either he would be recovered to some extent in six months, or he must be surely dying—which last was by far the most probable case with one who had to be moved continually through a wild country. Her grief had preyed upon her so that even her father had consented to her present journey, and all spies had been baffled by her secretly and suddenly taking ship and coming by sea. And now all that she wanted was one sight of Ithel to assure her he was yet alive—for handwriting might be simulated, and moreover she had never seen his handwriting. She would do anything; she would go anywhere and though any discomfort, hardship, or peril which Iolyn might deem necessary; she would submit to any wretchedness and adopt any disguise he might

think fit, only she prayed him by all that could move him to grant her one sight of Ithel; to ease her load thus far, and then she would go back with new strength and courage to comfort and sustain her father, whose position must so strongly appeal to Iolyn as well as herself.

The terms she used were far more potent than the brief summary here set down: they were as moving as a woman's heart in such a terrible position could pour forth in pathetic appeal to one who had power to grant or withhold the dearest boon of life.

And they moved Iolyn.

Ithel had already been told, a month ago, of all the correspondence, and had, some ten days since, himself written a long and loving letter of assurance to Mari in London. To this, therefore, he was now awaiting an answer, with what impatience may be judged when it is remembered that he was both a sick man and a lover. He had no means of knowing that she had left London before his letter arrived, and in the ordinary course could not expect an answer for three weeks or so yet. All the same, however, he was dreaming of nothing else, by day or night, and now he instantly divined that Iolyn had heard news of Mari.

Nor could Iolyn withhold the letter, though he

well knew that Ithel's first words would be a half command, half entreaty, to bring Mari through at once.

Ned was no support. "It's no use sayin' aught to a woman if hoo's (she's) set her mind. It's no use to tell her hoo'll get us o' hanged: hoo'll come o' th' same, an' then when we are o' hanged of a row, like three crows in a field, hoo'll skrike hersel' to t' dyeth, and co' hersel' names, an' then drown hersel' i' th' nearest water—but we's still be hangin' up like bacon flitches, for o' that. Tha mun go, lad; there's naught else for it. There is a chance o' thee fottin' (fetching) her through bout being discovered, while if tha' does no' go, then hoo'll come bout thee, and th' spies'll follow her like pack gals (galloways; pack horses) followin' a bell."

"Oh yes," returned Iolyn discontentedly, "but there's a proverb of your own that fits you now: 'Talk's cheap, but it takes money to buy beer.' And the same here. If this had happened when we were at your old place in the forest you would have figured up the consequences, and hum'd, and haw'd, and weighed and balanced, and offset, till one would well nigh have forgotten what the debate was about. Of course you were captain there, but still——"

"An' thou'rt captain here," put in Ned with a grin; "an' Aw'm takkin' no weight o' my shooters. Dal! lad, thou wouldno' believe how nice it is to nōne ha' to think what next, and no'but to keep ready to feight if need be. Why mon, Aw feel as leet i' th' heels as a two year owd cowt."

"Aye, but in your old forest den you would make every man help you with his counsel and here you will not even think, much less come to counsel."

"Counsel," repeated Ned satirically. "Counsel about a woman! Dal! Aw'm no scholar but Aw've moor wit nor that. A mon con do naught wi' a woman unless he's i' love wi' her, an' then he con do aught he will—if he is a mon—for if hoo's i' love wi' him i' return hoo'll do it for love, an' if hoo's not, then hoo'll do it for pity. Now Ithel's th' one 'at's i' love wi' her, an' thou connot ax him to tell her not to come, for he's like another mon o'ready, just wi' thinkin' 'at hoo's comin'. Moor-o'er, if hoo does come it'll be just what he wanted to set him up, an' i' th' inside o' two days he'll be wantin' to feight wi' somebody, he'll be so fain of hissel'."

"Then you think I should go?" said Iolyn impatiently.

“What arta’ short on? brass? Aw ha’ some coppers left,” returned Ned, with a wooden grin.

And between this cold comfort of Ned’s and the eager appeals of Ithel, Iolyn was forced to give way and start the same day for Chester.

CHAPTER XXIV

MARI was fully confident that in coming by sea she had outwitted all pursuit, but she had not fully gauged the desperate hatred of Maddox. As soon as he discovered for certain that she had left London, he started John Chapel and a select band of Old Bailey runners to Chester; which city was to be the headquarters whence they were to spread over all North Wales.

Chapel himself remained within the walls of the city, like a spider in his web, the centre of a network of spies. He kept two of the best men with him as a sort of body-guard, in case any of the Welsh in the street should recognise him as having been servant to Maddox at Wynstay. It was not his outward appearance which he feared might betray him; the scars from Ned's clogs and Iolyn's sword hilt insured his face, aided further by a complete change of wig and clothing; but he knew well enough that, in any moment of sudden excitement, his voice would set forth his identity plain as a

printed writ to anyone who had ever heard it before. Therefore in taking the air he confined himself to the top of the City Walls, where he was not likely to encounter either casual Welsh country-folk or drunken brawlers, the one to recognise or the other to provoke him.

His favourite stretch of the wall was from the Watergate to the Castle, where he could overlook the green Roodee with the placid stretch of river where in those days the ships came calmly up from the coasts of the outer seas. Here then, on the third day after his arrival, he was leaning upon the battlements of the Watergate, conning the chances and cursing the delay, as with an idle eye he watched a sail almost as idle reaching up the river. Then suddenly his chin stuck out ever so little and his eyebrows brushed together to hide the steely gleam of suspicion which shot from beneath them. From behind that idle ship, a boat, making believe to be even more idle, drew shoreward to land three people on the Roodee.

“Now that’s somebody wanting to appear as if they were just people from the city, out a pleasuring and now coming home. But they are from that ship, and ships don’t land passengers there: it’s either higher up or lower down when all is fair and

shiplike. I'm going to watch these pretty passengers," thought John Chapel to himself.

He never took his eyes off the party as they paced, in a would-be casual manner, across the flat towards him. "H'm! coming in through this very Watergate," said he mentally.

"One man; ship's captain by the cut of him. Got his shore clothes on: gold lace, no doubt, and all green and brown with snuff and rum and seawater I'll warrant. And he's doing the gallant to a couple of unprotected female passengers: that's plain. Queer set out altogether. H'm."

Then as they came nearer, his shoulders moved. "I think; oh, I think that I've met you before, my pretty little dear," whined he under his breath, apostrophising the taller figure of the two women. In another five minutes they were come within twenty yards of the gate, and looking down, he made no further doubt. "Oho!" he began in a low whispering singsong to himself, "so it is you, my dainty little mistress Mari! Oho! with your wimple, and your fine clothes all altered and changed. You thought you had disguised your handsome self so cleverly with those clothes, and your dear little face with that mask and those patches. It never occurred to you that a man recognises a

woman by her shape and carriage more than by all else. Look you, look you, my charmer! there, that one little movement of the head and hand as you turn to speak to that sea porpoise of a captain is quite enough to betray you among a thousand others. Oho! my dearest mistress Mari. Do come on; please enter and honour this poor city with your most charming presence. Don't hesitate: that's it; enter—and then; you'll lead me straight to that Iolyn who knocked me out of the saddle and that sweet Ned that kicked me within an inch of my life; the little dears."

As she passed under the gateway he turned to the nearest of his two men. "Forey; follow the tallest of those two women. Follow her and don't let her slip; no matter what happens—that's the woman we've come here to watch.

"And you, Wanlon," he continued to the other; "you come with me. I want you to start straight away for London and carry the news to Mr. Maddox. Tell him that I've found the girl here and say that he'd better come as fast as he possibly can. Come now," and with the last word he started down the steps for the street and their lodging.

And meanwhile Mari passed on to the house

where she was to stay, and when she was shown into the room which was to be hers, felt a great elation, even through her sadness, as she thought of how cleverly she had eluded Maddox and his spies.

Her letter was written next day and straightway went to the nearest member of the Cycle, but it was not till the last of June that Iolyn received it, and it was on the evening of that day that he rode into Chester, dressed like a hillside farmer, and with an empty pillion behind him.

Full of impotent discontent, his greeting was as little orthodox as hers, who was so full of gnawing anxiety.

"Do you still stick to your notion?" demanded he.

"Oh, tell me, is he still living?" exclaimed she in the same breath.

"Of course he is living," retorted he. "Why, he has been sitting up these ten days"—letting out more than he intended. "But I can't take you out there. Why, the spies——"

"Now, Iolyn, dear, you are not going to argue with me about that"—she had taken his arm in her two hands and was gazing into his irritably flickering eyes with a look he could not deny. "I will

not listen to you if you do. I know very well that you would never have come in to Chester unless you meant to take me back with you. Why, dear, I know already that you rode with a pillion saddle: so you see"—and a little smile broke through the pleading of her face as she saw his lips part for a hasty denial.

But the words did not come; instead he laughed a short laugh; sharp, may be, but still a laugh and she read her victory in it.

A single minute had finally settled the point, and five more sufficed to arrange the plan of carrying it out. It had been about eight o'clock, that is, within half an hour of sunset when Iolyn entered Chester; but the last of the great disc of molten gold was hardly down behind the indigo mass of the Moels, when through the Bridge Gate and across the Dee there passed a pair on horseback; nowise particularly to be distinguished from any pair of a hundred already gone that way since morning.

Iolyn, in the nondescript garments of a hillside farmer, was bestriding the stout Powys nag—whose steadiness did not prevent his possessing both pace and bottom—while Mari, riding a-pillion behind him with one arm round his waist, was scarlet cloaked and beaver hatted, shoulder shawled, frill capped,

and linsey kirtled, like any hillside wife in her fair-going best.

Once across the river the nag was headed for Mold and as they went Iolyn kept his eyes alive for possible spies and trackers. All that he saw, however, was one woman riding alone a couple of hundred yards in rear, with nothing noticeable about her save that her horse seemed a bid above the common farm-wife's cob. He drew no inference from the goodness of her mount however, until, having passed through Broughton and noticed that she still kept the same distance behind, he bent a closer scrutiny upon her through the dusk and, as she passed a roadside cottage, saw the gleam from its window light up a steel stirrup swinging upon the off side of her saddle.

"That is a good horse to belong to a man who cannot afford a side saddle for his wife," said Iolyn mentally.

Ruminating upon this he presently discerned a light ahead of him and, coming at length abreast of it, saw that it proceeded from a low hedge ale-house. A sudden plan struck him. "We will light down here for a few moments," whispered he to Mari.

"Wrap up your face as though you had the face-

ache and then follow me in and let me do the talking."

Dismounting by throwing his leg across in front of him, he helped Mari down from the pillion, and, after hitching his horse to the shutter catch of the window—where he could command it with a pistol from the inside—led the way within. Simulating a half tipsy voice he called loudly for a jug of hot ale.

"Hot ale?" repeated the keeper of the house. "What do you want with hot ale in June?"

"None of your business!" retorted Iolyn. Then, as if thinking better of it. "But I'll tell you. Can't you see that my sister here has a bad face-ache? And don't you know that there is nothing like mulled ale for that?"

"Och!" assented the aleman, as he disappeared to obey.

As soon as he was gone, Iolyn set a seat for Mari in the shadow, while he himself dangled one leg from the table betwixt her and the observation of anyone who might enter.

Presently, as he had expected, he heard a horse halt outside and a moment after in came the woman who had followed them; walking with a suspiciously awkward stride. She sat herself down on

the spere * at the opposite cheek of the chimney to Mari, evidently choosing that spot so that her face might be in the shadow cast by the hanging lantern, which gave but a smoky light at best.

Iolyn was just on the point of opening a jesting conversation with her when the ale entered, hot and smelling delicious. He changed his opening. "Sit down and take a drink with us," said he to the aleman, while he filled four mugs with the liquid. "But first hand this pretty blue mug to my sweetheart there in the corner; she just came in as you went out."

As the woman received the gift she nodded her thanks and smiled sheepishly. Then the aleman took a second mug and sat down at the other end of the spere from her, while Iolyn bowled out for himself and Mari. Just as he was about to lift and lead the quaffing, however, a sudden further spasm of half tipsy generosity seemed to seize him. In those days a lump of sugar was a rare delicacy, and accordingly he had, at a great expenditure, procured a small quantity wherewith to tickle Meredith's palate on his return. But now, setting down his cup, "Wait a bit!" he cried, as he pulled the

* A wooden bench with a back reaching sometimes a height of six feet and sometimes on up to the ceiling.

precious package from his coat pocket. "Here is something to put velvet in the ale. Sugar! that is the thing: we'll all have sugar in our ale. Here, catch!" ended he, tossing a small piece to the man of the house.

The man instinctively brought his knees together to prevent the dainty dropping between them to the floor. He caught it.

"Now you, sweetheart; catch also," went on Iolyn, tossing a second piece to the woman—and in the shadow he saw her bring her knees together in the same convulsive manner as the man.

Iolyn's face gathered a flicker of excitement.

Taking out another piece, "Here," said he again; "a man should give his sweetheart double of all good things. Catch this too."

Again the woman closed her knees to catch and Iolyn turned swiftly to Mari in order to hide the flash he could not keep out of his eyes. Then in a gentle tone; "and here, to you also, sister. Catch!"

He smiled outright; a smile like the flicker of a sword in firelight, as he saw her spread her knees with easy movement, so as to offer a wider lap to catch the toothsome fragment.

He did not waste any more of his package upon

himself but straightway lifted his mug. "Here is to my sweetheart in the nook of the spere," quoth he as he took a long pull of the beverage, winking the while at the landlord with a tigerish facetiousness.

Setting down his own mug he turned to Mari who had barely tasted. Affecting surprise, "Why, your face must be bad indeed if you can't drink a drop of good ale like that. I see I must be jogging again and get you home to be looked to."

He paid the reckoning and grabbed at the change as if every second were a matter of life and death, hurrying Mari out with a string of thickly uttered urgings.

"Well, he is pretty drunk at any rate," quoth the aleman to himself as he saw them go.

They had barely mounted when Iolyn struck into a brisk trot, and before they had gone three hundred yards they heard hoof strokes behind them. "Hearken to the hoofs," said Iolyn over his shoulder. "There are two horses now. I saw the second coming up as we mounted."

"The new rider is a man," answered Mari. "He came from Broughton. I saw him leave the town a long way behind the woman."

"The woman," quoth Iolyn. "Did you not notice how she caught the sugar?"

"Not particularly."

"Oh! I thought a woman would have seen it at once. That woman is a man!"

"A man!" echoed Mari in astonishment.

"Aye; did you not notice how she closed her lap to catch? Only a man does that. That is one man, and your other man from Broughton makes a pair. They can't speak Welsh however, for the woman-man was only guessing at my words when I spoke; I could tell that by his eyes, and if the other could have spoken it he would have been the woman. So they are spies; Gwgan's spies; on our track."

CHAPTER XXV

THERE was silence between them during the next few moments, for the news had come with such a shock to Mari that she was scarcely able to gather her thoughts to meet the surprise. Then at last, "What shall we do?" she asked faintly.

"It would serve them right if I pistolled both; as I would have done if I had been alone," growled Iolyn. "As it is, we'll give them the slip; well mounted and all as they are. Now listen: the cross roads are somewhere not far ahead and I know there is a broad place just this side where there is a row of giant beeches. I will check beneath the first tree; there is a good turf underfoot, and just as they jog past I'll shock into them and roll the nearest over. The other one I'll knock out of the saddle with a pistol—it will be just such a trick all round as when I captured Weir and Chapel."

"God help us!" exclaimed Mari involuntarily.

"You will stick fast to me," went on Iolyn, as not noticing the interruption; "there will be no danger and nobody hurt. The trick will be done before

you can well see how. I dare not kill them because that would bring you into the proclamation, which is just what Maddox would wish, to make his scheme complete. He would put a price on you too, and bring you to the gallows as his father brought my mother."

As ever, the mention of his mother set light to his madness again. But Mari felt the mighty breath he drew in, and before the strident yell in his throat could burst forth she had covered his mouth with a soft firm hand, while in his ear she whispered pleadingly, "Iolyn; dear Iolyn, do not give way now. Remember how it pains us all and that we have no one else but you to succour any of us."

He kept his lips shut and his chest strained full, every sinew in his body set like iron, till fifty yards were passed. Then in a great sobbing sigh he loosed his breath and she felt a hot tear of baffled rage. "Is my mother to wander forever?" he muttered thickly. "You cannot lay a ghost except with blood, and I tell you she cannot sleep till I lay her spirit with the blood of those who murdered her."

"But they are all dead now, Iolyn," answered Mari softly. "The Lord God is her avenger——"

"Aye; but the Lord God must use an instrument

for avenging her, and I want to be that instrument," broke in Iolyn. "Yea, I tell you—but, hush now; here are the trees."

Checking as he spoke he walked the horse into the deep shadow of the first of a file of embowering beeches, where the mould was like velvet under the iron hoofs, yielding no slightest sound. Almost immediately they heard the horses behind first pulled down to a heavy walk and then crowded up again to a sort of shogging amble, as if their riders came peeringly, suspicious from losing the sound ahead. Iolyn gathered his horse together with knee and rein ready for a dash; a long horse pistol clubbed in his right hand.

The other two came on, craning forward, and in the gloom which is a June night Iolyn could see that the supposed woman was on the farther side of the road, with the new rider between himself and her. "But I'll take the shine off her beaver," thought he to himself with an iron grin.

Then they shogged abreast of him and with a plunge of the rowels he drove his horse forward in a mighty spring.

So swift, so sudden, was the shock, where it quartered in behind the shoulder, that the nearest nag went down right under the hoofs of the one be-

yond. That one stumbled to its nose as if shot, then reared upright and plunged wildly away down the road, with its rider astride of its withers, scrambling and clutching at its mane in a frantic endeavour to regain the saddle. The woman's hair and woman's beaver had both been jerked off, exposing the cropped head of a man, while the string of gasping curses exploding at every jump from the scared lips bore unmistakeable testimony to the sex.

As he went Iolyn levelled the pistol to fire, but instantly Mari threw up his hand.

"Don't, Iolyn, don't shoot!" she cried imploringly.

One moment he hesitated. "Remember what you said of Maddox," urged Mari again.

He lowered the weapon.

"Very well, Mari," snapped he, a fierce begrudging in his tone. "But we'll chase him at any rate," he went on, urging the horse to double speed in wake of the flying nondescript.

As they disappeared, "All right—Iolyn!" growled the dismounted rider of the fallen horse, dragging himself out of the ditch into which he had rolled. "And all right, Mari, too. I'll not forget the names of either of you. And oh! if I only knew that cursed Welsh lingo of yours, so that I

could tell what else you said besides the two names. But never mind; I'll make all that up and so it's even better as it is. Your names'll do for Chapel, I'll uphold."

Iolyn checked at the cross roads, for he heard the flying hoofs pounding away down the road to the left.

"That will do well enough for us," said he to Mari. "We'll go on by Mold and up through Rhyd y mwyn. There Elis Bryn Eithin shall guide us out across the waste to Ystrad * Clwyd. The spies will only think of the road, while Elis will take us through between Moel Arthur and Pen y Cloddiau—yea, we shall do well enough now."

"Thank God for it," he heard her repeating fervently to herself.

He had, as he believed, effectually put an end to the efforts of the spies to follow him, and so he pushed on without further qualm. Skirting Mold he soon reached Rhyd y mwyn and before long had roused Elis of Bryn Eithin to get them a supper of wholesome flummery and milk, which, together with the hour's rest, did Mari a world of good.

Starting again, Iolyn led the horse while Mari rode; Elis guiding them by sheep trails a hand's

* Ystrad = strath.

breadth wide, over rock and through heather, till at last the arching daylight found them in green pastures again. The silver ribbon of Clwyd wound brightly beneath their feet, and yonder in front the dark wildernesses of Hiraethog were warming to life under the wine of the new sun, that tinted them all tawny with elusive gold.

A handshake at parting was to have been for all reward to Elis, but Mari from under the frilled cap loosed the embroidered ribbon that snooded her hair beneath. "Give that to your sweetheart," said she with a sad little blush.

"Not till she is your wife," put in Iolyn promptly; "for either she'll grow jealous and give you the back of her beaver to stare at, or she'll worry the secret out of you and then—then it will be a woman's secret," ended he with a significant smile.

The smile went round, evoking another handshake, and then Iolyn started forward to cross the river, keeping to no path saving in so far as it might lead towards the stream. Reaching the bank he mounted and pushed into the first ford that offered, gaining the other bank without further incident.

"And now for the cave," said he, as he set the nag's head towards Trefnant.

Coming into the road from Denbigh to St. Asaph he followed it till it dipped into the beautiful Glyn Elwy. Here crossing Avon Elwy they turned to the left up one of the loveliest glyns even in Wales, and as she gazed around Mari could not suppress the cry, "Oh if my father were only free!"

"Ah!" answered Iolyn, "this valley is indeed fair enough to tempt you, yea, I reckon you would wish to hide here and nurse Ithel forever."

Her only answer was a sigh of distress and Iolyn kept silence as they passed along the edge of the level, under the beautiful hanging woods which on this side, as on the other, clothed the enclosing steep with bosky robe. Then, where the river at another bend opened a scene even fairer yet, he followed the bridle path as it quartered down to the edge of the water and up along its pebbly margin till he came abreast of a grove of ancient sycamores.

Stretching his hand, "This is the demesne of Wigfair," said he to Mari, as he turned in the saddle to look at her. "Yonder on the height is the house of it—the trees hide it—but here in the low land; here in this grove, is Ffynnon Fair itself. But come you, Mari, and look at it in the daylight;

for it is deep in my mind that you'll stand beside it at midnight before the days be many."

He had already reined to his right across the mead that was as green as living emerald and level as a floor, and before the wonder in her eyes could shape itself into a question she saw, in the midst of the grove, the grey walls of a ruined chapel, from whence issued a purling stream of crystal clearness. The roof was gone; the stone tracery of the windows was gone; the two doorways were empty of oak or bar; here and there the ivy threw its green mantle over the desolate walls; and yet the glamour of hoar loveliness kept it more sacred still in its decay. From it no sweet toned bell would ever again call weary hearts to vesper rest; only the blackbird whistling clearly from the bough o'erhead might call the ploughman's mind to the days that were long vanished—only the lark from the mead would chant the matins of that scene of peace. The sad and crumbling beauty of the ruined Capel Fair; Our Lady's Chapel, hallowed with mystic peace all the tender scene, till the spirit of it stole into the heart of Mari like the incense of heaven, and she turned her face away that Iolyn might not see it.

But he felt the effect and without a word assisted

her to dismount. Leading her inside, he yet kept silent till he stood with her at the edge of a broken shrine, within whose carved and masoned base welled the cool deeps of Our Lady's Fountain. "This," said he gently, "this is Ffynnon Fair:* and perhaps you will see it again sooner than you look for."

Mari knew to what he alluded, but she stood still and quiet, gazing into the well, for the place was holy, and she felt the peace which keeps the spirit steady in sorrow or in joy.

No more was said as he led her out and mounted her again, though this time he took the bridle and walked beside the horse's head. For they were come nigh to the end of their journey. Another hundred yards or so and they found the river drawing along close under the wooded slope, where the glyn was narrowed to a gap scarcely more than wide enough for the water.

"Here we must leave the horse," said Iolyn halting. "This trail up through the wood will take us to where we are going."

The top of the path led out upon a rocky point, one of the two horns of the vast cliff in whose breast is the cave of hiding. When Iolyn reached

* Fountain of Mary.

the point he saw on a seat by the cave mouth the figure of Ithel. He felt the tremor run through the arm he supported. A few steps more and they were face to face. He loosed her arm; he heard the cry of recognition—and he passed on in to where Ned was suddenly busy in preparing breakfast.

Said he of the Clough, “He’d ha’ deed, lad, if thou had come back bout her.”

CHAPTER XXVI

BUT while this happiness was in the cave, something occurred in Chester which boded ill for its continuance. The two discomfited spies had returned crestfallen to meet John Chapel, and were more than pleased to be able to report to Maddox himself instead of to his ferocious lieutenant. They quite smiled with relief to find that he had arrived from London; so much had they dreaded the other.

Maddox did not stop to curse their stupidity; he was learning the sleuth-hound's business better; but he straightway laid information against Mari as an aider of forfeited rebels, and a partaker with them in the attempted murder of two of the King's Peace officers. Not content with the warrant, he proclaimed a reward for her arrest in a sum equal to that upon her two "accomplices."

This done he gathered all the band of his creatures and started for the mountains, while one of Meredith's kin copied the proclamation and despatched it, by the most innocent seeming of messengers, westward for Dolben.

In this same ill shadowed train of circumstances Elis Bryn Eithin had an unwitting share. When he received the ribbon he first turned straight for home, but with every step he took the words of Mari drummed louder in his ear. "Give it to your sweetheart." A black eye was haunting him. The day was beautiful. What better day to go and see Gwen Bolland?

So he sat him down and debated, with the natural result that presently he was striding back with his face towards Trefnant, where, in Nant Patric, quick-tempered Gwen resided.

Now Gwen was bound that day for Denbigh market, so never a gift came handier than this incomparable ribbon. She tied it round her neck and let the embroidered ends hang down upon her bosom. It was such a pretty ribbon.

But none of these things were known as yet in the cave which had been the refuge of hunted creatures from paleolithic days. Instead, Mari was trying to thank Ned, who stubbornly refused to be put on any pedestal.

"Aw'm no'but a—footpad—miss; though Aw've never hit ony mon fro' beheend, nor took aught fro' a poor chap. Aw trapped Ithel for brass an' naught else; an' as for nussin' him at th' after, why, that

were th' Doctor, an' how could Aw say aught agen nussin' him after th' way he kept his word about th' two guineas? An' that Hessian dooment too, why, Aw were feightin' for my own neck, and don't yo' ne'er believe aught different."

But all three of the others were by this time smiling so broadly that he gave it up and walked away. Iolyn followed him and there befel what at first blush might have been the prelude to a very pretty fight. Said Ned sharply, "What 'st ta bin tellin' yon mak of a tale to th' lass for? It maks a foo' o' me, as if Aw reckon't to be a mon 'at ne'er did an ill deed in his life."

"D'ye think I told her anything at all?" retorted Iolyn, his turn now to grin. "I've better use for my breath than trying to persuade a woman to believe this, that, or t'other. A woman guesses some tale that pleases her and a whole bench of bishops, talking a whole day, wouldn't shift her belief. But you'll learn these things some day. You are young, yet, Ned."

"Ecod!" swore the other, his anger lost in mild astonishment; "An' thou'rt a rare an' ancient owd mon thysel'. What were thy address afore th' Flood? and what breed did they book thee under when thou went into th' Ark?"

"A donkey, I suppose," retorted Iolyn genially; and so the breeze blew over.

Ithel seemed to have gained weeks of strength in the hour since Mari's arrival, as they two sat in the warmer air of the mouth of the cave. Though the prospect at their feet was one of such rare beauty, yet mere landscape was not the thing which Ithel was so earnestly pointing out to her. Instead he was explaining the peculiar safety of their retreat. Two paces in front of them the limestone cliff dropped down a hundred and fifty feet, to the level strip of mead through which the Elwy gleamed on its arrowy course. Above their heads the bare front rose straight as a wall into the blue, while on either hand it pushed out two horns like the crescent moon, sixty paces or more from tip to tip, and in the centre of the hollow breast between yawned the mouth of the cave.

The only approach to the latter was along a narrow ledge which stretched from point to point of the crescent at the level of the opening, forming a path at first barely wide enough for one person to pass at a time,* but becoming broader as it neared the

* There is now a good and well made path for both approaches, and thick bushes protect against an ordinary slip or stumble.

cave, until it gave a platform of two or three paces wide in front of the opening.

The easiest way to come at the cliff was that by which Iolyn had brought Mari; up the wooded slope from Ffynnon y Capel, but even by that, once the horn was reached, the path was so dangerously narrow for the first few steps; the cliff towering so straight above and dropping so sheer below, that a single resolute man could there keep a company at bay. The other horn was even worse if anything; the broken and densely wooded craigsides beyond having nothing better than a goat trail leading through to the outer world.

While Nature had provided the place against all assaults save that of famine, it had also furnished a curtain to screen it from observation. Where the ledge broadened in front of the cave, the cliff immediately below was ragged and broken for a few feet down, and here green bushes clung in the crevices, screening the path, while right in front of the opening rose a long limbed oak; one branch of which extended backwards as if it would take fresh hold of the cliff above the entrance.

"You see that we are impregnable," ended Ithel as he laid the points of their security before Mari.

But as she listened while he dwelt upon this aspect

of things, more and more poignantly did his words bring up in her mind the contrast between these free wilds and those grim walls of Newgate which pent her father in.

Ithel read the thoughts which made her clasp her hands so tightly and filled her eyes with unshed tears. "Courage; sweetheart," he whispered; "I shall be well now in a day or two at farthest. Then we will go to London and plan some way of escape for your father. Remember what Winifred* of the Black Herberts did: surely we can do something too."

"Ah; I do remember her, but so does the government," responded Mari with a despairing gesture. "The very first time I was admitted to Newgate the jailer shook his keys and pointed to the irons that hung and clanked about my father. 'You see we remember what that other Welshwoman did after the last rebellion,' said he, jeering at me; 'But we know better this time.' No, Ithel; the only hope lies in the clemency of the king, and you know what that means."

All the new dreams in his soul could not avail to shake the mournful conviction which had settled in

* Winifred, Countess of Nithsdale. She was a daughter of the Lords of Powys.

Mari's breast, though he continued the debate in fondest terms. The shadow of the prison cell was on her heart too heavy to be lifted.

But while they were thus engrossed Iolyn took the opportunity to depart upon an errand the object of which he kept to himself. Even Ned did not know that he was gone to Rhuddlan, where Shon Goch was about due from a voyage to Ireland.

It was evening when he returned, and at the beginning of the path he met Ned. There was a smile upon the latter's features so dark and hard that Iolyn checked at once. "What is it?" demanded he under his breath. "Is Ithel dead?—or Mari?"

"What is it?" repeated Ned. "By th' mass, lad, yon Chapel and his Maddox are rare uns. Dal! but Aw'd like to rive th' yeds off bwoth on 'em. Lad! it's no'but about ten minutes sin'—yigh, happen it's th' hauve an hour sin'—there coom one o' Dolben's men up here wi' a papper fro' Chester. What dost think? Maddox has gotten Mari outlawed too; for that's what th' papper coom to i' th' finish.

"Aw gan it to Ithel, but he went so white at readin' it that naught would do but hoo (she) mun ha' a look too. Just at th' first hoo seemed relieved like; hoo thought it had bin some harm to him, said

hoo. He kept his een on her then and so Aw did mine, for Aw knew what were written on the papper. Then hoo begun to gawm (understand) what it meant, an' we could see it getherin' in her face.

"Lad, her face was summat to see when at last hoo begun to get her words out: feightin' wi' her throat to help 'em come. It wer' a sort of a whisper an' hoo were tellin' hersel' 'at this papper meant 'at hoo couldno' go back to London; 'at hoo should ne'er see her father again; 'at hoo'd sin him for th' last time i' this world; an' 'at when hoo did see him that last time hoo were irreverent, talkin' of hope and release—not of death an' askin' his blessin', as hoo ought to ha' done.

"Then hoo began to say 'at it were o' her fault for comin' here against our advice—but by that time Ithel had howd of her an' Aw coom away——

"Yigh, lad, Aw ne'er did want to see a mon so mich as Aw want to come across oather Chapel or Maddox."

Iolyn's features were twitching with the intensity of his excitement as he listened, and Ned could see the effort which he was making to restrain himself. His words however were perfectly calm and collected.

"Where is Dolben's man?" said he.

"Yonder, at th' other point. Aw put him theer for sentry till thou geet back," answered Ned.

"Then keep him there till I get back again a second time," said Iolyn promptly. "There is no time to lose now, and I am going to make arrangements with Shon Goch for getting these two safely beyond the reach of proclamations. Keep a good guard"—the last word came from ten paces down the slope, where the speaker was already moving away.

CHAPTER XXVII

MEANWHILE the web was weaving on in Denbigh. In the late afternoon Maddox and two of his creatures had ridden up the main street, with eyes keenly alert, and half way along they met Gwen Bolland with her finery well to the fore.

The ribbon had been a favourite one of Mari's; one she had ornamented with her own needle, and thus Maddox recognised it at the first glance. Drawing rein, "That is a pretty ribbon," said he; "What will you take for it?"

"More than you can give," retorted Gwen.

"Come now," said Maddox; "you must let me have it: I want it for my sweetheart."

"So did the man who gave it to me," snapped Gwen.

"And who is he and where did he get it?" returned Maddox.

"A better man than ever you dare be, and he bought it, and if you want to know any more go and ask him—he'll then give you the thrashing you need."

"Oh, will he?" retorted Maddox. "Well I am going to see him. That ribbon you are wearing belonged yesterday to a farmer's wife, who left Chester with her husband only last evening. They were riding a brockle faced bay, with three white fetlocks, and they were set upon close to Mold and robbed and murdered; the horse being shot too, and I want you before the magistrate about it."

"You lie," broke in Gwen, her hot temper blinding her to the clumsiness of the trap. "That woman and her man went past Nant Patric this very morning, when I was going milking; riding the same brockle faced nag with the white fetlocks—and that was an hour before Elis gave me the ribbon. They rode on into Glyn Elwy, too, and if you'll follow them you'll find them and see what a liar you are."

"But you'll have to come before a magistrate," reiterated Maddox.

"Magistrate!" shaking her fist in his face. "If you're not off this minute; you curd-faced rabbit, I'll call the constable to you yourself for a drunken highwayman—only you have not the spunk to be one."

By this time a crowd had collected and Maddox was in a quandary. He felt sure that Gwen had

told all she knew and that to have her arrested in the face of the crowd would turn suspicion loose upon himself as a stranger: suspicion which would speedily result in warning the three he sought, and thus start them on some new flight. He drew in his horns therefore and put his horse into motion again, followed by the shrill clamour of Gwen's biting tongue.

To shake her off he turned to his left and trotted smartly through a side street till he came to Chapel Street. One or two more such cuts freed him, and then he immediately made his way to the house of the most unpopular person in the town; the only Whig magistrate the place possessed. This individual, one of no particular kin or come-fro', jumped at the chance of helping to hunt down a rebel and so dealing a back handed blow to popular sentiment.

He listened eagerly to all that Maddox chose to impart of his errand, and when he heard that Gwen had seen Iolyn and Mari pass into Glyn Elwy he gladdened on the trail at once.

"I know just where they are," said he; "I have been pretty sure of it for a long time but I could do nothing here, alone, where every man is openly a Tory and secretly a rebel. Moreover I can furnish

you with a guide, too. He is in the lock-up just now; these pig headed Tory Justices have a grudge against him and want to transport him. But you can bail him out. Now how many men have you?"

"I can have fifteen of them here by darkfall," answered Maddox. "Just wait one moment and I will start off the two fellows I have with me to gather the rest." Which done, he returned to draw up the plan of operations.

Darkness had fallen a good hour or more that night when the first of the party stole out from Denbigh along the road to Hênllan, where the meet was to be. One by one the rest followed until the whole were mustered. Then, Chapel and the guide leading and Maddox bringing up the rear, they moved stealthily forward along the road till they descended into Glyn Elwy at the boundary of Dolben, right opposite the cliff of the cave itself.

Creeping with wolfish cunning; keeping well within the gloomy shadows of the overhanging woods, they passed beyond the sleeping house till they could cross the river dry shod by the Pont Newydd. The soft grass underfoot gave forth no sound as the guide now led the way up the steep slope of the Cefn, and the dusky web of the mid-

summer night hid them completely from any watcher on the cliff. Their arms were short hangers and pistols, so that their coat skirts covered all, and there was neither gleam nor sound of metal to betray them.

Once on the top of the ridge they paused to breathe and then Chapel, taking nine men, followed silently where the guide started forward again for the sheep path which would ultimately lead them to the most dangerous horn of the cliff. Almost at the first step they plunged into the tangle of wood and scrub which there runs steeply down into the glyn, and it was necessary to clutch the stems and branches to prevent the feet from slipping and betraying them. Then as they drew forward they went with very breath abated; feeling for each step before setting down the foot, until at last they stood firm on a more open spot within a dozen yards of the horn.

That horn, being the least likely to be attempted, had been given by Ned into the keeping of Dolben's man till Iolyn should return; and this man, weary with a day's hard work and lulled by the sensuous summer night, had fallen asleep as he lay along the ledge where it jutted farthest out. But the guide knew nothing of this as he seized Chapel's hand in

token that where they stood was the limit till the rush itself was made. The path was plain and firm from there on to the jutting nose, and so he left them to wait till he should have conducted Maddox and the other five round to the opposite approach.

The way of this smaller party was along the level ridge above, and so within a quarter of an hour Maddox found himself standing on the trail leading up through the wood from Ffynnon Fair; and within half pistol range of the point which Ned lay guarding.

The signal to begin was to be a shrill whistle, both parties then simultaneously to rush forward to the attack. A couple of minutes to gather breath and then weapons were out; the whistle sounded; and with a crash of twigs the five men dashed after the guide where he made straight for the point. Two paces past it and the leader's legs were jerked from under him as he leaped. One wild upward fling of his clutching hands; one instant rattling gasp of dread, and then head foremost through the empty air he went down, headlong down, till the dull thud of his mangled corpse came up from the glyn below.

The man next behind sprang back from this unseen danger. Straightway a shriek from him proclaimed

that he had missed his footing and he followed the guide through the blackness, while Ned rose from his knees and with a step forward fired his pistol right into the body of the third, where he hesitated at the outmost face of the point. Then as he jumped to the point himself he distinguished the other three hanging back irresolute in the bushes just beyond. He only grinned as the balls of their hasty unaimed volley whistled past him, and at two paces' range his second pistol dropped the nearest of them, while the others turned and flew down the trail, following the craven Maddox, who had run at the first shot.

For a stride or two Ned seemed inclined to follow, but, halting, he drew another pistol and fired it after the fugitives. "Aw've settlet that lot for one neet, chuzhow," said he to himself in grim complacency.

"Hello!" the awakening came too late. A rush and a flash of light behind him, and as he whirled to meet the danger a crashing blow half stunned him, while in the same moment a pair of sinewy arms seized him and bore him down upon his back in the bushes. Instantly half a dozen hands clutched him, pinioning his limbs and holding him helpless, while his first assailant knelt upon his chest and

pressed the cold circle of a pistol muzzle against his forehead to emphasize the wolfish snarl.

“ Quiet! or to h—ll you go!”

For John Chapel, leading his own rush, had stumbled upon the sleeping Dolben man and straightway stunned him where he lay. Almost without pausing he had resumed the rush, leaving the last two men to bind the sentinel, while the rest followed after himself. Seeing the pistol flashes at the other horn he had dashed on past the cave and attacked Ned from behind, his venomous soul savagely set that none of the hunted party should escape.

Ned recognised his voice at once and instantly shut his teeth upon the answer which was on the tip of his tongue. If Chapel had not discovered his identity it would be foolish in himself to betray it. Neither was he disconcerted by the flash of the dark lantern which shone upon him, for he knew that the other had never seen his features and would only know him by his voice, even as it had been with himself.

Next moment however, he felt a cold chill of back-set in his heart as his captors whipped a stout cord round him, binding his wrists and elbows close to his body. Then one of them remained kneeling beside

him, with a pistol to his ear, while the rest followed their leader as he darted back to the cave mouth, where the two who had bound and left the Dolben man were now standing guard. With the lantern held aloft Chapel turned to the left and, pushing past the straw mat which served for a door, found himself within ten feet of a rude table, where, in the light of a single candle, sat Meredith, while beside him, white with dread and yet risen as if to protect him, stood Mari.

One glance at the fiendish triumph in Chapel's face and she turned to her lover.

"We are lost! Ithel! We are lost! Iolyn was right—my coming has betrayed you."

Then as Ithel, too weak still to fight, looked up with a world of sorrow for her in his face, she added, with a cry of agony; "Oh can you—can you ever forgive me?"

CHAPTER XXVIII

JOHN CHAPEL'S fury, when he found that Iolyn was not in the cave, transformed him into a howling demon for the next few minutes; and his paroxysm of rage so startled his men that they forgot all else in watching it. He tore into the long reaches behind, panting and snapping curses, till a sudden stumble jerked the lantern from his hand and left him in darkness. Then he stood rolling out a string of blasphemy till his subordinates had lit torches of greased rushes from a pile near the table, by the light of which he stumbled back again, still raging.

Sticking a pistol into Meredith's face where he sat, "Tell me where he is?" screamed he, "or I'll blow your head off!"

With a shriek of horror Mari dashed the weapon aside. "Oh!" yelled he; "that's you, is it? Take that for meddling then; you ——!" and with the word he aimed a savage blow at her face which would have crushed it completely had not Ithel, with a gasp of pain, risen and flung himself upon the villain's throat.

"To strike a woman!—Help me if you be men!"

panted he to the fest, and two or three of them, being still Englishmen, dragged Chapel away towards the entrance.

"They are prisoners," said one sternly, "but they are not convicted yet."

"Ho! you too," screamed Chapel with a horrible sneer; "We are lawyers too; are we! But I'll see you roasted alive yet for interfering with me. Ho! I will!"

But the other lifted his pistol so swiftly at the threat that the half crazed fool had yet sense enough left to pause before arraying his own party against himself. Then he suddenly remembered and with a dreadful whine of "Oh, there's that one we captured outside. If he won't tell us I'll cut it out of him with a knife!" he seized a torch and darted out again, the rest following.

Halting in front of the opening, "Bring that prisoner here!" he screamed, gesticulating towards the point beyond which Ned was lying.

One of the men immediately went to obey and in another minute Ned was led along between his guards and placed before the man whom he had aforetime punced.

"Where is Iolyn; tell me, you gallows bird, or I'll ——"

The temptation to snatch a brief triumph was too strong for Ned. "Gwon! hours sin'. An' thou 'll ne'er catch him if thou runs till thou drops dyed!"

The tone was enough for Chapel. With a gasp of rage, "Oh you are the one who kicked me to death nearly. Ho! I'll burn you, burn you! burn——"

He made a savage thrust with his torch at Ned's face as he screamed the threats, but the flame made the guards dodge also and like a thunderbolt Ned planted a murderous kick in his assailant's abdomen. The curses broke short off as the raving villain dropped like a beef under the butcher's poll-axe, and a great slow groan betokened the paralyzing nature of his hurt.

The guards threw Ned upon his back again too quickly for him to repeat the blow, but as they held him down they heard him chuckling grimly. "Happen he'll larn some day 'at a mon's feet are for feightin' wi' as weel as his honds."

The unexpectedness of the blow so astonished the men that they stood blankly gazing from one to the other and wondering how it was done. Then all of a sudden, with as little warning as they themselves had given, a volley of shot belched in amongst them,

dropping three of them in their tracks, while Iolyn, with Shon Goch and the Dolben sentinel, fell upon them like wolves upon a prey.

The movement was swift as it was deadly. The Dolben man, fierce to retrieve his disgrace, leaped past the other two and seized the nearest foe. That one in turn clutched at the next man to save himself and in that instant all three went over the edge together; growls, oaths and screams commingling as they went whirling down through the black abyss to the bloody mead below. Shon Goch with his clubbed carbine drove down another corpse, while a fourth man, firing at him with extended pistol, received a blow in the neck from Iolyn's broad bidogan that sent him to join his fellows in the glyn.

That one was the last, for previously Iolyn, seizing a torch from the ground, had ripped up one in the cave mouth as he rose, and then, heedless of the slash that laid the side of his head and face open, had driven the heavy blade into the next man's brain, withdrawing the ghastly weapon in time to half behead the one who had wounded Shon Goch. Then his eyes fell upon the crouching figure of John Chapel and the red steel lifted instantly with the impulse to despatch him.

But Ned had risen to his feet. "Nay, lad,"

cried he; "ston' out o' th' gate till Aw pounce him to t' dyeth gradely this time."

Iolyn turned, lowering his weapon. "Oh! then you are safe, Ned?"

"Aye an' so are t' other two," answered he. "Now ston' wide till Aw show this Chapel 'at Aw dorn't need honds to kill sich a mak as him."

"Nay, Ned; neither boot nor bidogan: we'll hang him! hang him!" the lad's voice rose in frenzy with the words and Ned, noting the glare in his eyes, drew back and yielded.

"Yigh, we'n hang him wi' this rope he teed my honds wi'. It comes in just reet, John," he went on in iron jest to the doomed villain.

But Chapel, sick as he was, did but snarl and spit at him, showing his teeth like a trapped wild beast, and when Shon Goch, in spite of his wounded arm, strode over to help Iolyn to untie Ned's bonds, he made a limp movement as if he would roll off the ledge and cheat them yet by suicide. Instantly Shon plumped down upon him, knocking the little remaining wind out of him, and he lay, gasping blood curdling curses while the others prepared a noose.

Then the rope was ready and Shon Goch rose and stood aside while Ned stooped to fit the cord to the

villain's neck. With a swift snap Chapel closed his teeth on Ned's right hand and at the same time making a mighty effort, caught him by the throat with both hands, growling and shaking him with dog like ferocity. Straightway with a great oath Shon brought the butt of his carbine upon the side of the growling jaws, smashing them out of all semblance, and Ned lifted his mangled hand, showing it streaming with blood in the torchlight.

"Up with him!" shouted Iolyn.

They dragged the doomed man to his feet. They fitted the noose to his neck. They passed the rope over the limb above. "Now!" cried Shon Goch, "Yo ho! heave oh!"—and then the body of John Chapel was swinging and kicking convulsively between heaven and earth, paying the dread penalty to which his treachery had doomed so many others.

CHAPTER XXIX

THERE was no time for lagging however. Almost before the grisly pendant of the oak had ceased to quiver, Ithel and Mari had been apprised of their rescue, and the wounds of the three had been roughly and hastily bandaged. With the same speed and inspiration the lovers seemed to realize that the future held but one course for them, and that Iolyn's argument was unanswerable when, as delicately as he could, he insisted that they should be forthwith married and then take ship at once with Shon Goch for France.

"Mari is a virtual outlaw now and she can never go back to London," he went on. "The well wedding, too, is just as binding to-day as it ever was. Look through the books of pedigrees and you will find shield on shield whose quarterings come from such marriages. Everything is ready and the curate of Hênllan is waiting for us at the well—for so I arranged with him before I went the second time to Rhuddlan for Shon Goch.

"And we must make haste before we are

attacked again; for a troop of dragoons marched into Llanelwy (St. Asaph) this evening, only three miles away."

Not even one poor minute could be spared wherein Mari might have endeavoured to seize and possess her own soul against the surging emotions of the moment. The hour brooked no delay and thus at the mid of the summer night a grimly pathetic procession issued from the cave and along the ledge for the trail to Ffynnon Fair. Iolyn, his head all bandages, led the way, torch aloft and weapon ready. Next came Shon Goch, arm in sling, supporting Mari, whose eyes were bound that she might not see the corpse which dangled in the cavern's mouth, or the ghastly stain that glistened underfoot. Lastly Ned, his hand tied up, more than half carried the wan, weak frame of Ithel—surely as strange a wedding procession as ever sought the altar.

With eager haste they descended through the wood and crossed the mead till they reached the ruined chapel of Our Lady, where the first flash of the torch discovered the grey old curate beside the well, standing impassively ready for the ceremony. Then the two lovers took their places, kneeling on the curb of the outer trench of the fount, and with-

out a whisper of preliminary the parson proclaimed the banns.

Three several times he cried them, the smoky light of the torch turning the tinkling water at his foot into a sheet of quivering fire, and making the roofless chapel all eerie to the sight.

And at the last word Iolyn answered, "No one denies us. Proceed!"

Then from the printed page the words began, until—"Who giveth this bride?" cried the curate.

Straightway Iolyn stepped to the other lip of the well, his head all red in the dripping bandages, the grisly bidogan flashing in his hand as he answered, "I give this bride. I give her!" Then plunging the blade without a splash into the water, he laved it clean, crying as he did so, "No one denies me. Proceed!"

"With this ring—" But Ithel did not hesitate for lack of a golden band. Reaching up, he plucked a tendril of the ivy which hung down over the broken wall. The leaves were small upon it and interfered but little as he twined it tenderly round the finger of his bride,* tying it fast in a soft knot of glinting green.

* The ring is not so all important in Welsh mountain weddings. The loop of the Church door key, and even a piece of string, have served before now to tie two fond hearts together.

In another moment the words were ended and the two drank together of the Fount of the Chapel to bind them man and wife, linked in as iron a bridal as ever a pair could wish.

Iolyn stood fast till the rest had passed out and then, as the last foot crossed the threshold, plunged the torch into the water. "So may all their troubles be extinguished," cried he.

"Amen!" concluded the curate from without.

Still with the same stint of time the brockle faced horse was brought out again and Meredith straightway hoisted into the saddle. The curate kissed the bride gallantly as he helped her up to the pillion behind, and then Iolyn took the nag's head and struck out for Rhuddlan; Shon Goch and Ned walking one on each side to assist Mari in keeping her husband from falling.

In spite of frequent rests for Ithel's sake dawn saw them safely aboard and the "Myvanwy" dropping down with the tide along the edge of Morva Rhuddlan. But as they passed the then tenantless sandhills of Rhyl, Iolyn turned to Ned who stood beside him. The other two were safely in the cabin.

"Here, Ned," said he, "take the purse now. There will be enough to keep you all going till you can hear from Ithel's kindred—for you will have to

stay and look after the two of them in France till Ithel is strong again. Tell Mari that I am gone to see what I can do for Pengraig—and Maddox.

“And now, good bye, Ned: and all that I have is to go to you if anything happens to me. Good bye!”

“Thee be d——d!” broke out Ned, letting the purse drop on the deck, as he stepped back to avoid it. Then he darted forward to clutch Iolyn, but too late, for the lad had leaped his farthest overboard and was swimming for the tufted shore. One instant Ned hesitated and then the strange smile on the other’s upturned face struck into his heart with the hopelessness of any attempt to change that iron-set will, and so he stood, silencing Shon Goch with a word and a touch, while he watched his late companion cleaving the grey waters in momentary widening of the distance between them.

He saw him touch the bottom: he saw him wade the three strides to the strand, and then, as he gazed, the lad turned upon the top of the nearest sandhill and waved his hand in final parting.

One long look and one long stride and then he had vanished into the hollow beyond.

“Lad! lad!” broke forth the watcher on the

deck: "Aw's ne'er see thee agen i' this world—an' Aw'd liever ha' lost a brother!"

But while Ned hesitated on deck, finally binding Shon Goch to keep the secret of Iolyn's leaving till they should be well on their way for France, the one he mourned for was lying in a gap of the dunes, straining his gaze after the swelling sail as the breeze caught it upon the free waters of the open sea. The little gusts darkened after it, cresting softly white the line where they reached the black hull's quarter; the foam track churned in the wake of her; the figures on deck dimmed and died out, undistinguishable from the mass; the hull itself drew down, and then only the canvas stood out in the rays of the young sun of a soft summer morning—and still the two eyes, changeful in their light as the sea they struck across, strained after it.

Then from a mere feature of the coastline, the bold front of Rhiwledn* suddenly lived into the picture, planting its inexorable foot forward into the dark glory of ocean between the watcher and the thing he watched so hungrily. "Thus far hast thou beheld; Oh mortal of brief years! Now is thy vision shut out. Turn thee and weep, for thou shalt see them never more. And, yet; though thou

* Called in English, "The Little Orme."

mayest find it iron-hard of belief, The High God
still sits immovable over ye all!"

And with a passionate cry Iolyn flung his wounded
face forward upon his arms and wept his last tears
on earth.

CHAPTER XXX

MEANWHILE the final tragedy had begun in London, where, on the 23rd of June, the special commission assembled in the Town Hall of St. Margaret's to try the Jacobite prisoners. This was while Mari was on her voyage to Chester, all unwitting that such proceedings were so near. But it was not till the 18th of July that Pengraig was actually tried, and it was on Tuesday, the 22nd of the same month, that he and sixteen other companions in misfortune, were sentenced, collectively and in block, by that dread formula.

“That ye be taken hence to the prison from whence ye came, there to remain till upon a date ye be drawn to the place of execution, and when ye are come there, that ye be severally hanged by the neck—but not till ye be dead, for ye must be cut down alive—that your bowels be then taken out and burnt before your faces; that your heads be then severed from your bodies and your bodies severally divided into four quarters and those to be at the king's disposal.”

To this barbarous sentence Pengraig listened little moved, for he had never ceased to expect it from the moment when, newly captured, he had come face to face at the end of the lane with his infamous ward and betrayer. Thus it came to him now but as the final milestone, telling of the nearness of his journey's end; for he had spoken truly when, turning for that last long look at Derby, he had exclaimed that in that moment the bitterness of death had passed his soul for ever.

Within the prison his immediate friends were the officers of the ill-fated Manchester Regiment, and he and they were together when, at two o'clock on the 29th of July, the order arrived for the execution next morning of himself; Francis Towneley; George Fletcher; Thomas Chadwick; James Dawson, and others, all of the same regiment. The doomed men heard the warning with a manly cheerfulness born of their unshakeable belief in the sacredness of their loyalty to the Stuart Cause. Men of stainless faith and courage, their original sense of the justice of their conduct in taking up arms had been fired and exalted by daily intercourse with each other, and above all by the passionate words of Pengraig as he poured forth his poet's soul in indignant refutation of the foul libels which political hacks turned out

unceasingly, all with the one object of vilifying and misrepresenting the motives and characters of the doomed men and their cause.

At his instigation it was that each of his fellow-sufferers had already drawn up a statement and a justification of the faith that was in him, together with a reiteration of the steadfast loyalty which had led them all to this supreme witnessing.

So now, when the words were ended which told them that tomorrow was the last day which should dawn for them this side Eternity, the cheerful light that broke over Pengraig's face went round the whole group as each re-echoed his deep and fervent resignation, "God's will be done!"

The mournful news soon spread through the town and evening brought the hardest hour of all, when the friends and kindred of the doomed came in to take their last farewell. What mind is there which can picture that hour unmoved? the tears, the sighs, the terrible sobs which shook the forms of the delicate women; some so soon to be so awfully widowed; all to lose those whom they loved devotedly, and one, distraught, who was to prove the depth of her love for poor Dawson by dying at the sight of his death next day—these made a scene to think of which yet thrills the soul with horror.

And through it all, not with stoical indifference; not with the scoffing levity which jests at God and deems irreverence the barb of wit; but with a calm and manly resignation; with that gentle firmness and tender strength best becoming Christian gentlemen in the shadow of the Bar Eternal, the prisoners kept their fortitude amidst the wild abandonment with which their friends bewailed them.

The merciful sternness of the jailer's orders cut short the torture at last. A callous kindness forced asunder the convulsive entwinings and loosed the last embraces. The clang of barred doors drowned the last wail of grief; the grind of grim locks shut out the last sob of bursting hearts, and all was once more silent in the cells of the doomed—"they went to rest at the usual hour and slept well!"

Next morning when they were roused the condemned men were unfastened from the floor, to which they had before been chained, and were further allowed to descend to the courtyard of the prison for an hour's exercise. They might have been going to saunter in some pleasant garden of flowers and singing birds, so cheerfully they went, each walking with his own particular friend. Pengraig and Towneley were first and as the former

caught sight of the prison caterer he spoke to him with playful sternness. "Ha! now you shall make us some coffee to breakfast. And I warn you to make it good and strong, for I have never drunk any since I have been here that was fit to come near a gentleman."

A smile went round the whole company as they heard the words. "Still looking after us, father," said Towneley in gentle jest; "but you will have little more trouble with us, I fear."

"And yet," he went on after a moment's pause; "there is one more thing which we would have you do. At the last moment we cannot all speak at once, and therefore we think it would be well if one should speak for all—and that one you, dear friend. Will you add this last favour to the many you have already done to us?"

And so that point was settled, for Pengraig could not refuse.

Breakfast over, their irons were struck off and then they were pinioned. Next, after a short interval, they were tied, head downward, on three sledges each drawn by three horses, and presently the great gates of the prison opened to give them egress upon their last journey. With a refinement of cruelty the sledges were accompanied, not only

by the executioner, but also by "certain butchers of the town" in ghastly presage of the hideous office they were presently to perform in the mutilation of those beside whom they now strode with steels and choppers clanking.

The melancholy procession was surrounded and guarded by a troop of dragoons and several companies of the Foot Guards, while all around pressed a jeering mob, the scum of every slum in a city of slums. The soldiers marched in stern silence, but the taunts and execrations of the mob rose to a wild yell of delight when, upon reaching Kennington Common, it was seen that the gallows was ready, and close beside it a huge pile of faggots and a block.

No minister of the Established Church nor priest of Rome had been allowed to attend for the administration of the last solemn consolations of religion to those about to die. Yet, still undaunted, Pengraig, kneeling, book in hand, read prayers and meditations while his companions, kneeling also, followed the words earnestly and joined with fervent voices in the prayers he offered. No faltering, no wailing; tears all done and eyes turned consecrately forward; earth with all its hopes put firmly yet tenderly behind them; these nine heroic souls knelt in sad

valour beneath the gallows, nor suffered the sound of the crackling flames beside them to shake the hearts so soon to be consumed therein.

Nor when at length, devotions ended, they stood upright once more, were there any recantations, real or simulated, of their faith to the Stuarts, or any admission of the rights of the usurper. Such things they left to others who might be moved by considerations beyond their simple comprehensions. Instead, Pengraig, with firm utterance, made the short speech which he had promised to make, reiterating their ideas, comparing the respective rights and merits of Stuart and Hanover; rebutting yet again with infinite scorn the infamous report that they themselves had offered to recant upon a promise of pardon; and freely forgiving all their enemies from the usurper down to Weir and Maddox; finally ending with—"And lastly, we beg all we have offended that they will forgive us for the sake of Jesus Christ; Our Mediator and Advocate. Amen."

With the concluding word Pengraig took the papers of his own declaration out of the book of devotions which he held in his hand and flung them amongst the crowd; following them up with the book itself and next with his gold laced hat. So likewise did the rest.

And now on their part remained no more to be said, no more to be done. The cart was ready, the ropes were adjusted, the signal given, the wheels moved—and they were gone to where there is only Infinite Pity for those who die for the faith that is in them, be it never so mistaken.

CHAPTER XXXI

JUST as this first part was done there fell a short commotion in the ranks of the infantry guarding the scaffold. A wild, unkempt and ragged figure had attempted to thrust through and reach the gallows. One soldier with his elbow attempted to push it back and at once received a blow in the face which sent him all his length. Instantly the next man brought the butt of his musket down upon the ragged intruder's head, stretching him senseless.

"What is that?" demanded the nearest corporal sharply.

"Some thief or cadger pushing through to see better," answered the private.

But it was neither thief nor cadger lying there so still behind the ranks; it was poor Iolyn. Through many a hindrance, many a peril, and many an hour of hiding or stealthy progress, he had at length reached London only too late. A country jail had held him for days till, with incredible toil and patience, he had worked his way out and escaped. To this he had added a grim stroke of daring, for

he had then immediately broken into the house of the Justice who sentenced him, and from the portly man's own bedroom recovered the bidog which had been taken from him at capture.

Late last night he had entered London, walking on till he reached the top of Ludgate Hill. There he paused, and his mad hatred broke into a dreadful muttering. "Ho! you that murdered my mother! Ho! that usurping line whose pressgangs seized my father! All the marches on from Preston I pictured the ruin of you. But Maddox! Maddox, whose father used the Usurper to seize my father and used you tradesmen to ensure the hanging of my mother: he stepped in; he betrayed us and turned us back. Tomorrow Maddox shall pay the recompense and—" Here the blood rushed to his temples, and out through the mirk of midnight rang the terrible cry of his unappeased mad longing—"And then I will come for you, ye smug batteners upon bloody laws! And you shall count the cost in blood and ashes when I gather the gutters against you!"

The clatter of the approaching watch had roused him, and he turned and made his way to Holborn and the labyrinths and rookeries of Newton Street, where fugitives from justice were then surest of shelter. Here he intended sleeping no more than

a few hours, but the utter exhaustion of his now emaciated body prolonged his slumbers till late next morning. Awakening then, he learnt that Pengraig had already been carried from Newgate to execution, and the news stung him to self-torment for having selfishly slept so long, as he considered it. Dashing away at top speed he had no clearer plan than a frenzied notion of suddenly falling upon the procession of prisoners and rescuing Pengraig single-handed.

But the streets were vacant, drawn empty by the brutal show already passed, and as he came to the common and saw the crowd he put on a fresh burst of speed in hope to strike a blow before the actual tragedy should commence.

And this was he, breathless and spent with haste, weak from his wanderings and the still raw wound on his head and face, who had come up just as the last figure fell from the cart, and pushing through had been unceremoniously stretched out.

As he lay there in merciful unconsciousness he did not see the horrible details that followed. He did not see the ghastly work of quartering knives and choppers; he did not see the dripping fingers that tore out still living hearts and cast them into the flames, nor hear therewith the savage formula,

"This is the heart of a traitor!"—But he roused in time to hear, when the hideous butchery was ended, the revolting yell of the executioner, "God save King George!"

He stood for a moment like one dazed and then he caught the commotion at the edge of the crowd beyond, where the affianced bride of young Dawson, after watching every stroke of the mutilation of her lover, had finally fallen back dead, with his name upon her lips. Striding over to the place he laughed vacantly as he heard the story from one of the excited bystanders. Then the crowd began to melt away and he saw, sitting in a state of collapse in one of the coaches beside him, the wife of Pengraig.

Stepping up to the window he took a paper from his breast and thrust it through into her hand. "Give all I've got to Ned," said he.

The touch roused her; she looked into his face and the look brought all the old wild light into his eyes.

"Ho! and I had forgotten Maddox for a moment," cried he.

"Oh heaven! Iolyn!" ejaculated the poor lady in fresh grief, forgetting for the moment his outlawry and the danger of his being discovered.

But his own utterance of "Maddox!" had already

attracted the attention of two persons riding past, and at the name "Iolyn!" one of them turned instantly to the other, crying excitedly: "Gad! Weir! Here is that cursed Iolyn too. Call the dragoons; I'd almost sooner the other came to life again than lose this one."

The lad caught the speech. He took the hand of his past benefactress in his and kissed it fervently. "Good-bye, mother!" said he. "Here is Gwgan Maddox."

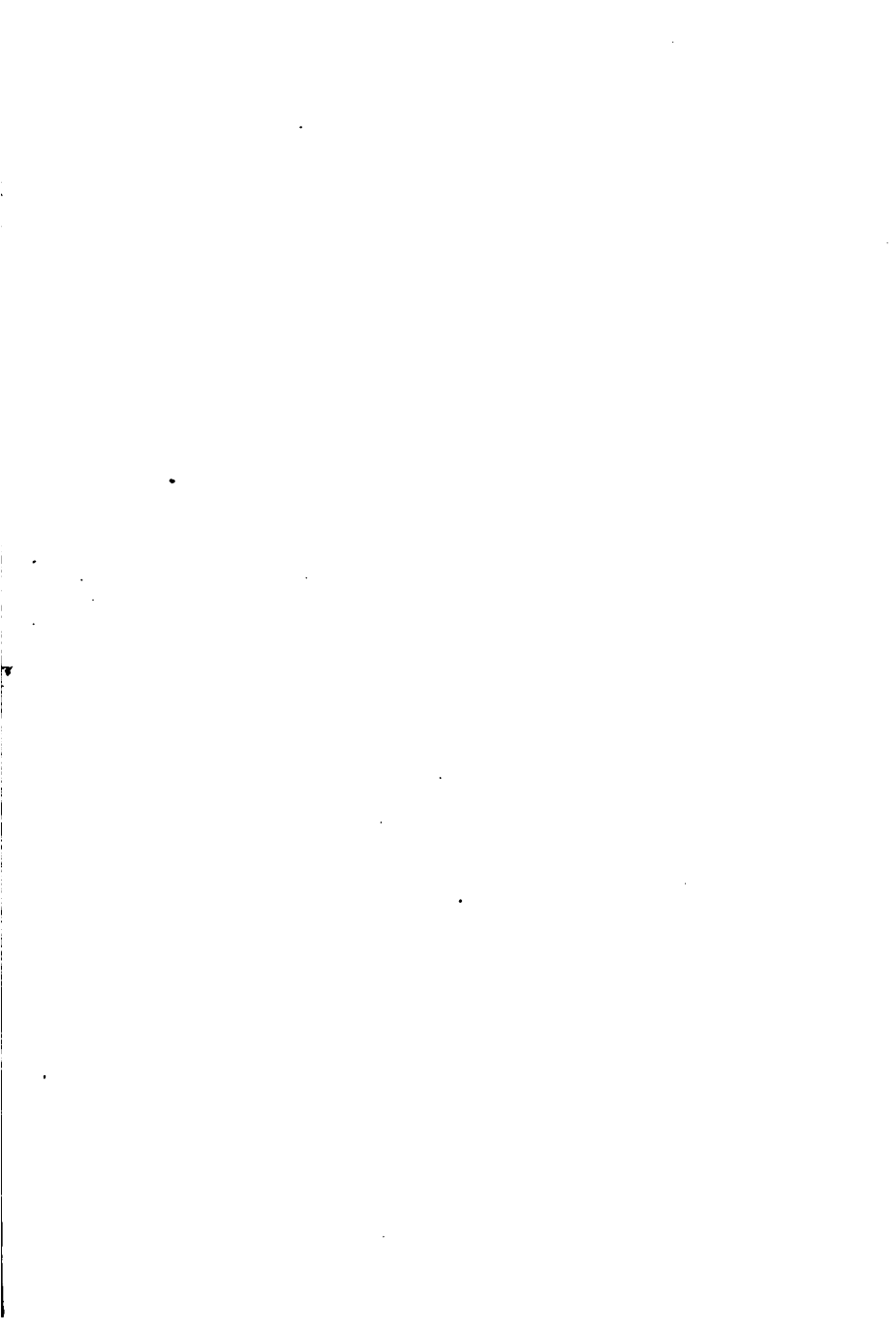
Then he turned and the bidogan was bare in his hand as Maddox stared in dumb surprise at his altered face, recognising nothing save the lurid light that glowed with awful fascination from his eyes. A convulsive jerk of the bridle reins, added to the animal's own instinctive dread, brought the horse round with a whirl to escape. But it was too late.

One spring of the ragged figure and the left hand seized the rider by the collar and dragged him from the saddle. His heels struck the ground; his head was stretched backwards over the avenger's knee. The heavy bidogan touched the taut muscles of the throat and then, while the bystanders stood paralysed in beholding, the grim steel went remorselessly through flesh and through joint, and as the grisly

trunk dropped lifeless to the ground, the self-appointed executioner stood upright, holding aloft the severed head as he cried with awful distinctness. "This is the head of a traitor! God save King James!"

Weir had brought the near dragoons. They fell upon the man standing there in red triumph. Their great swords swung aloft as they spurred at him. He did not wait: he leaped against them with the bidogan. Man and horse, he stabbed remorselessly at both alike as the riders slashed at him. Silent as a trapped wolf, terrible as a cornered tiger, he thrust and hacked until, hewed to a mere trunk, he lay with glazing eyes staring fixedly up to heaven—the seared brain quiet at last; the life so tragically begun terribly ended. Under the swords was peace—death.

THE END.





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